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F@ckin' hell, CVG's got the first screens!

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WORLD'S FIRST PLAYTEST!

FINAL FANTASY x2!
X-2 And X-2 and Crystal Chronicles verdict inside

VAN HELSING

CVG DRAWS FIRST BLOOD WITH
PS2'S ULTRA-VIOLENT SCAREFEST!

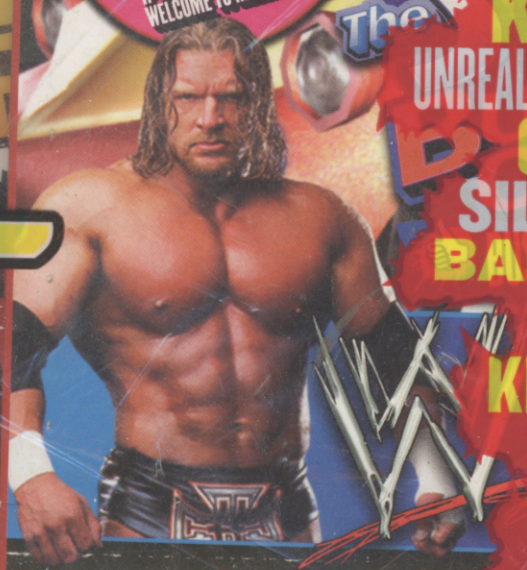
FIRST FOR GAMES!

ULTRA-V
SCAREF

FIRST REVIEW INSIDE

007 EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

licence to thrill or 007 out of ten?



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LOOK! NORKS!

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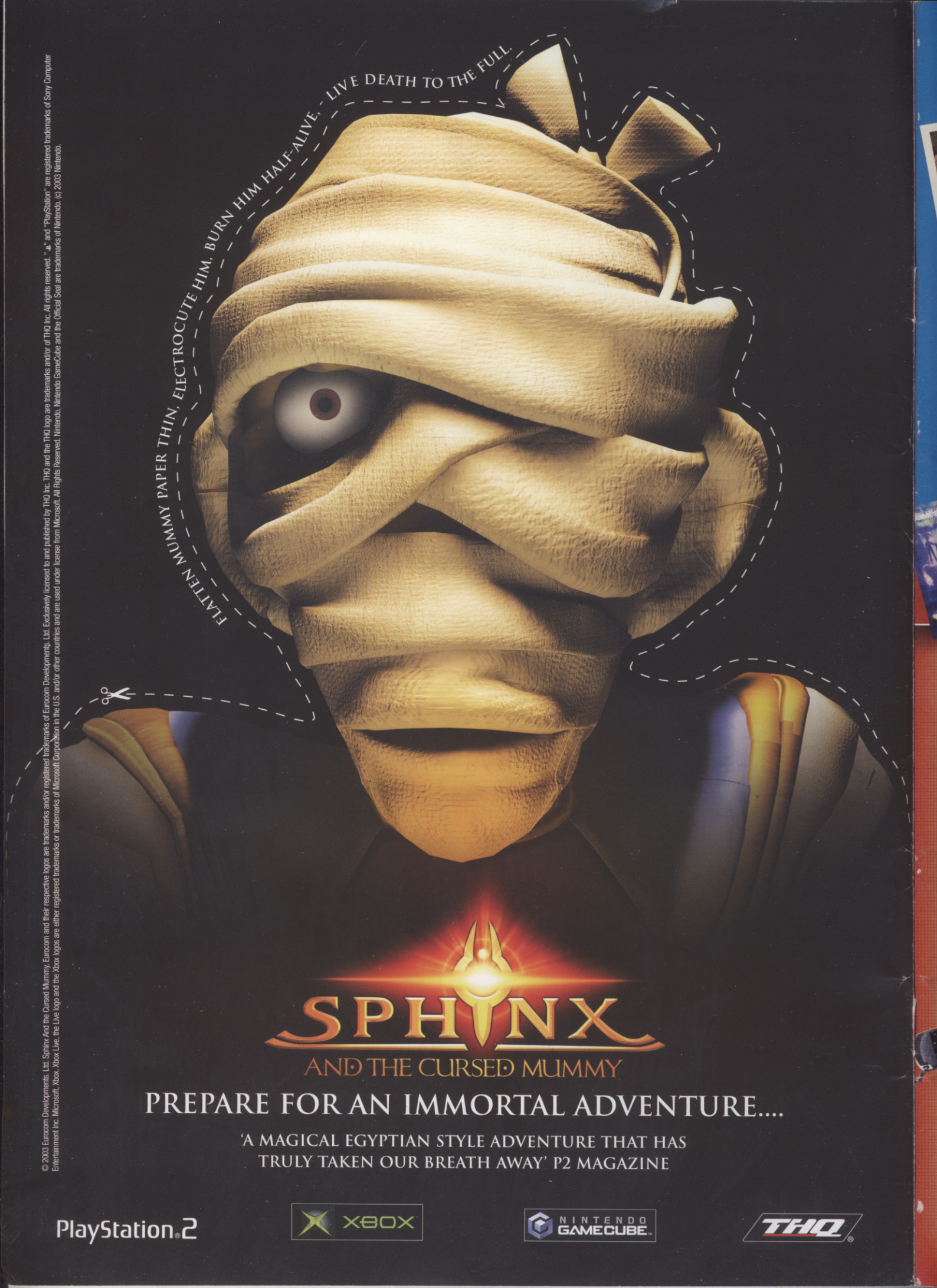

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HAVE YOU SEEN IT YET?

The movie trailer for Van Helsing, that is. It stars the guy who played Wolverine in the X-men movies, and takes the best bits of every monster movie ever made, rolling them into one blood-soaked blockbuster you've just got to see.

It's like Dracula, The Mummy, Wolfman and Frankenstein became pals at school and decided to pick on the geek with no mates – our man Van. But they didn't bargain on the double pistols, silver crucifix and crossbow with explosive-tipped bolts he carries in his rucksack! Hell, he's even got a minigun with silver bullets. Eat that, Drac! It's guaranteed to be the hottest property this May, and CVG's got the WORLD EXCLUSIVE on the explosive actioner that's hitting PS2 at the same time, and boy is it looking H-O-T.

We've gutted vampires, torn werewolves to shreds and even been ravaged by half-naked blood-sucking vixens (it's a dirty job...) to make sure you're the first in the world to see this gore extravaganza in action.

What are you waiting for? Turn to page 24 now, then tell your mates where you saw it first...

Alex Simmons Editor

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Double fantasy! Full verdict on PS2's X-2, and in-depth play of GC's Crystal Chronicle

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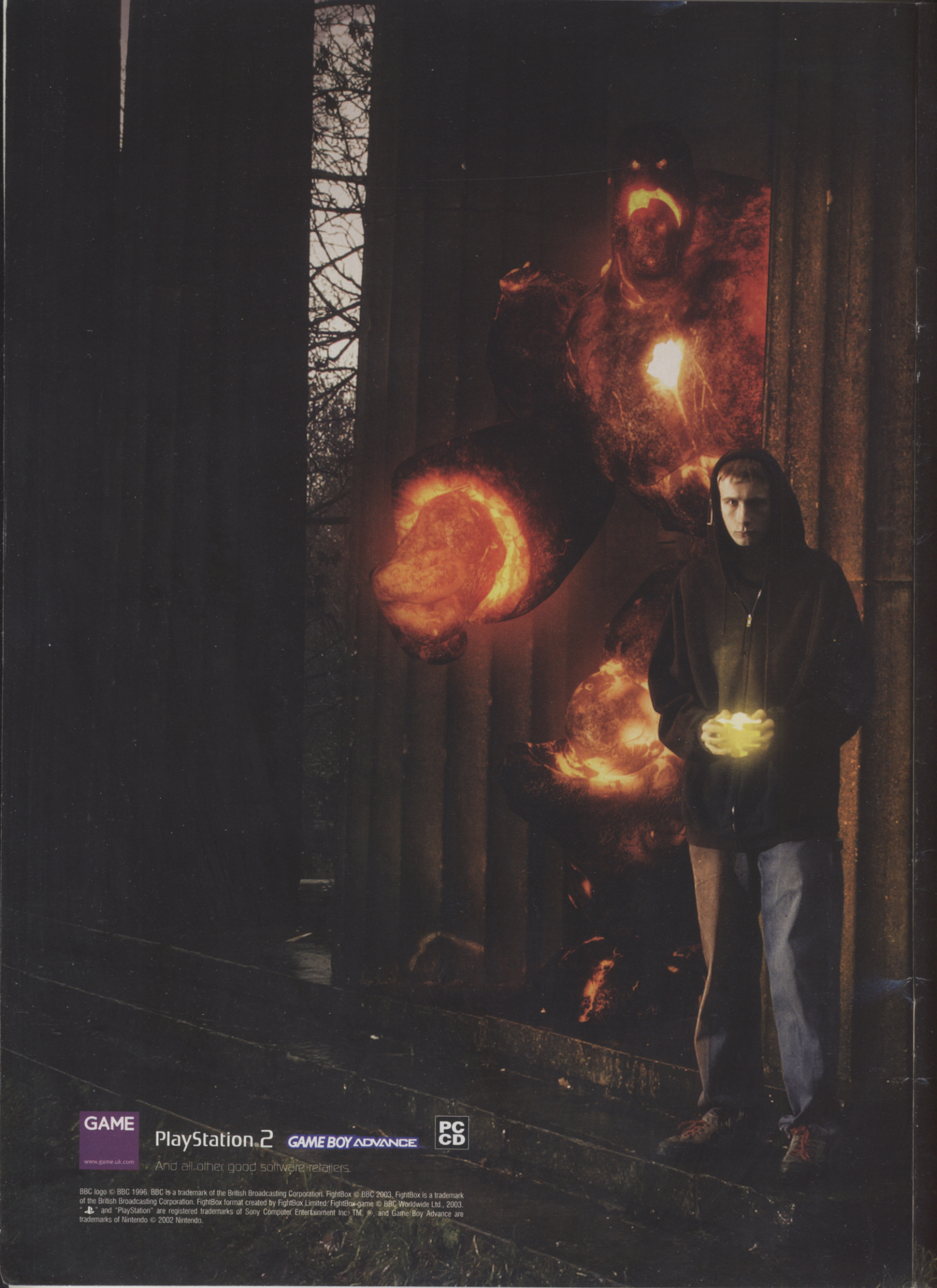

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DOUBLE VISION

NINTENDO'S NEW DUAL-SCREEN HANDHELD LEAVES GAMES INDUSTRY DUMBSTRUCK & CROSS-EYED

STOP PRESS

We're the first to welcome hardware innovation with open arms. But when Nintendo recently announced plans for a new handheld codenamed Nintendo DS (Dual Screen) we ordered in a job-lot of straightjackets.

Not for us mind. We sent them as a gift to Nintendo boss Iwata and the crazies responsible for its new oddball on-the-go contraption due at the end of 2004.

Sony's upcoming PSP handheld is so powerful and charming that it's sure to become the ultimate portable playboy for 2005. So you'd think that Nintendo – lord of mobile gaming for over 20 years – would retaliate with the announcement of a pocket rocket phenomenal enough to elbow Sony's machine out of the picture. But, sadly, from what we can tell so far, the Nintendo DS is unlikely to even dent PSP's armour.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The mini machine is scheduled for a grand unveiling at E3 this May. However Nintendo has fed us a few scraps of info on the DS in an effort to keep us on tenterhooks.

Most significantly it'll boast TWO three-inch TFT LCD screens powered by two separate processors. Immediately we're getting flashbacks of Nintendo's double-screened Game & Watch handheld from the early '80s, but the Japanese giant is heralding this Dual Screen 'innovation' as the future of portable entertainment.

Iwata stated that the DS is "based upon a completely different concept from existing game devices" and concluded that it would "provide players with a unique entertainment experience for the 21st Century".

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Admittedly the concept behind Dual Screen system is a world apart from its distant Game & Watch ancestor. The point of having two screens isn't simply to provide a larger gaming area. With DS the two screens serve very different purposes.

The example given by Nintendo is a football game. Imagine on one screen you see the full pitch and manage the action as a whole. On the second you focus on one player's shot or tackle. You can simply glance between screens, as the action occurs on both screens in real-time.

Quite how it'll work is still a mystery, as is the thinking behind the whole idea. It's rare that we ever want to focus in on a bit of action, but even if we did what's wrong with the camera zooming in or split-screen? Do we need another screen?

ROUGH SEAS UP AHEAD

Our first impression is that DS has got gimmick written all over it, and even though Nintendo is bound to

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

Word has it that there'll be two or three first-party Nintendo games ready for launch at the end of the year, and it's believed that Miyamoto is already working on a title for DS entitled Buzz.

Why shouldn't a grown man spend quality time with his cuddly toys... ?

the team

MONSTERS ARE ALL OVER THE MAG THIS MONTH. CHECK OUT THESE FREAKS!

Alex Simmons
EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- GTA: Vice City
- 007:Everything Or Nothing
- Castlevania

Alex finally succumbed to the joys of Xbox Vice City this month, taking on the role of Tommy Vercetti with glee. But things have taken a sinister turn – two motorbikes and a Ferrari appeared in the office the other day and he's started forging fake money on the CVG printer. All fine, but pimping out Paul's body for quick profit is taking things too far.

Pete Walker
DEP EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- Splinter Cell 2
- Unreal Tournament 2K4
- Deus Ex: Invisible War

Poor Pete. He doesn't half love his first-person-shooters, but those evil game companies keep dangling Half-Life 2 and Tribes 3 like a juicy carrot in front of a hungry donkey. In the meantime, Pete's been busy creating his own physics engine by spilling cups of coffee and punching us in the face to watch our rag-doll reactions. Beats Havoc any day.

Lee Skittrell
REVIEWS EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- FF Crystal Chronicles
- Sword of Mana
- Castlevania

Lee's hardcore RPG credentials have started to play tricks on his mind. He levels-up every time he whips some review copy into shape and the other day he asked the corner shop bloke for the Elemental Rune of Ashganar. Playing Sword of Mana on the train doesn't help – every time goes into a tunnel he tries to slay the dungeon master.

Mike Cooper
NEWS EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- R-Type: Final
- Project Gotham Racing 2
- Rainbow Six 3

Online gaming rules, and Mike rules online gaming. Not only has he been creaming the competition at Gotham 2, now he's honing his special forces skills on Rainbow Six 3. He loves online gaming so much he wears his Live headset all day. In fact, he thinks he can take you all on. Have a look for him online, his gamer tag is... oh, chicken.

THE BEST THINGS COME IN THREES

EA has just announced a partnership with Free Radical to publish the third TimeSplitters game in 2005, and it'll also publish Burnout 3 for Criterion. More on both next issue.

THE MONTH'S BEST RUMOUR

Nintendoids everywhere are having frothy fits of joy following online rumblings of multiplayer modes in Metroid Prime 2. All will be revealed officially at E3 in May. Samus vs space pirates?

JAK III IN DEVELOPMENT

Naughty Dog has already begun work on Jak and Daxter's third epic adventure. All signs are pointing to another PS2 exclusive. We'll keep you posted on the goss and will be revealing all the hard facts very soon. Stay tuned!

FACT FLURRY

WHAT WE KNOW

- Two three-inch TFT LCD colour screens
- Each screen is powered using its own processor
- One Gigabit's-worth of semiconductor memory
- Two/three first-party games to coincide with release
- Namco is developing games for it

WHAT'S RUMOURED

- Expected to cost around £150
- Not compatible with Cube or GBA
- It'll be backlit and rechargeable
- Flip-top design like old Game & Watch

develop some wonderfully quirky games, it's tough to see third-party developers spending stacks of money and time on creating titles that will only be playable on this format. Especially once the novelty value wears off.

It's true that third-party publishers and developers are already hopping on board, including Namco, but the burning question is whether they'll stick with it. Especially as most of these companies are producing PSP games, which promise to be much easier to develop and more profitable for all involved.

ROUGH SEAS UP AHEAD

Nintendo claims that the DS isn't a successor to GBA SP, rather just another string in its hardware bow. Whatever. It's failed to capture our imagination so far and that's the bottom line. Don't get us wrong, we want it to be the best thing ever. We'd love DS to be a worthy opponent for PSP. However, truth is the DS, like the GBA/GC connectivity thing, sounds a nice idea in cloud cuckooland, but in the real world it seems impractical. Go on Nintendo, prove us wrong.

We'll bring you the full report on the DS this May, direct from E3. Don't miss the first no-holds-barred verdict only in Planet CVG.

YOU WHAT?

Is Nintendo's new handheld a palm-full of plop or classic Nintendo genius. Email your rants and raves to mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

PSP PRICE HINT

SONY BIG CHEESE SUGGESTS MOST LIKELY COST

News of the Nintendo DS won't exactly have Sony quaking in its boots, and as far as CVG is concerned PSP has everything going for it at the moment.

For starters, Sony's slice of portable paradise isn't going to be nearly as expensive as many sources have claimed. In a recent interview Chris Deering, President of Sony Europe, mentioned that PSP will hit stores at around 200 smackers instead of the widely predicted £300 price tag.

In other PSP-related gossip, heavy rumours are circulating that the handheld will now boast 32Mb of RAM instead of 8Mb. Developers have been kicking up a stink ever since PSP was first announced with only 8Mb of RAM.

It's all very geeky, but with 32Mb the machine would be almost as powerful as PS2. However, without this extra oomph developers will struggle to produce games of the high calibre that we're all expecting. Our insider sources claim that the rumour is true, which is awesome news for everyone because it simply means better games.

In another chunk of good news, PSP could well be available here sooner than expected – reliable sources suggest a global launch by the end of 2004. Hooray!

SONY BITES APPLE

iPod has been a storming success, but Apple better watch its back. As we all know, PSP can be used as an MP3 player (capable of storing up to 1Gb's worth of tunes on certain Memory Sticks) and is a killer games machine and multimedia unit too. All this for £200! Apple's new 4Gb iPod Mini costs £230 and it only plays music. We know which one we'd go for.

NANOBREAKER

CASTLEVANIA CREATOR TRADES IN WHIP FOR COLD, HARD STEEL

First Look

■ This month Konami has lifted the curtain on its newest balls-out fantasy fighting adventure, Nanobreaker. Looks-wise there's a strong resemblance

KONAMI DOES A CAPCOM

to Chaos Legion, and with Castlevania legend Koji Igarashi at the helm, all bodes well for gameplay. You play the unnamed hero seen in these roasting first shots.

■ Although the action promises to be lightning fast, the story isn't much cop. It's that same old chestnut where technology turns against those who created it.

BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

In this case it's nano technology. Microscopic mechanical blighters are out of control and you must tame their evil creations with your shape-shifting plasma blade.

■ There's promise of an advanced combo attack system that enables you to pick up any object that the nano-machines have tinkered with and using it as a

RISE OF THE MACHINES

secondary melee weapon. Nanobreaker is coming exclusively to PS2 and is pencilled in for launch around the end of the year. Go polish your swords.

GAME OVER

CVG'S CYNICAL CRITIC DEAD AT AGE 33

We're greatly saddened to announce the passing of Cackman. There is no option to Continue.

"I can't believe he's gone", sobbed his distraught partner Ms Cackman. "I heard the start of his death jingle. By the time I'd made it upstairs, he'd eaten his own head and exploded into pixelly yellow lines".

Cackman used his penultimate life to survive the announcement of the Nintendo DS. Police are treating the death as suspicious, pointing to Cackman's paranoid final scribblings. CVG prints these on page 114 in tribute.

Graeme Boyd
STAFF WRITER
CURRENT FAVES
- Van Helsing
- Pro Evo 3
- NHL Rivals

Graeme's been playing so many sports games that he's given up exercise. "What's the point, I play football and ice hockey every day," he said. We don't really mind, but all those greasy haggis and white pudding suppers he gets flown down from Scotland are taking their toll. You should see the sweat stains on his wee bit hill and glen...

Paul Davies
CONTRIBUTING ED
CURRENT FAVES
- Puyo Pop Fever
- Splinter Cell 2
- R Type: Final

Paul's been designing a new game this month. It's called 'doing the stage dive' and involves tripping yourself up on the office floorboards while listening to loud Eighties cock rock. He also bought a rare and hideously expensive heavy metal LP on eBay. We told him he could just get the Darkness album but he started moshing and tripped up again.

Jaime Smith
ART EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- Castlevania
- Pro Evo 3
- SF2 Collector's Edition

Jaime's so amazing at Pro Evo 3 that he's started to use his design skills to craft the perfect goal. Some early efforts are being exhibited at a poncey local gallery and goateed art critics have started turning up at our lunchtime sessions. We wish him well, but we're not too happy about him calling *our* goals 'mainstream low culture'. Posh nob.

Mike Newson
STAND-IN DESIGNER
CURRENT FAVES
- 007-Everything or Nothing
- Mafia
- Armed and Dangerous

Mike's a true design machine. He designs, designs, stops for a quick game of 007, designs. Even when he's playing games he's designing level maps and schematics. He even bought one of those slow cookers so he can fit more designing in between meals, and now he only eats once every six weeks.

Steve O'Hagan
ACTING PROD ED
CURRENT FAVES
- MTX: Mototrax
- Goblin Commander
- FF X-2

When Steve O's not in the office is all shouts and animal noises. When he's here it's a haven of musical tranquility as he gently strums an acoustic guitar while subbing. It's so relaxing we didn't even notice the day CVG's gourmet slipped his seafood paella into the microwave. Until vile gerbil food waftings assaulted our nostrils. Nasal terorist.

"The way you interact with the racing community is the key here. Your relationships with other crews and what they think of you"

Studio Manager Don Whiteford talks Juiced, Acclaim's new online mod racer for Xbox, PS2 and PC

VIEWTIFUL JOE ON PS2!

Capcom has confirmed its kung fu kid will be cartwheeling onto PS2 later this year. In similar news Capcom's stylish graphic novel-inspired Killer 7 is also headed to Sony's mean machine.

HALF-LIFE 2 ON SALE NOW...

... In Russia. According to reports a version of Half-Life 2 – created from Valve's stolen source code – is on sale on the other side of the iron curtain. Valve is taking the theft seriously and one geeky US suspect has had his house raided by the FBI.

Hot or Not?

KILLZONE

Flip to page 13 to get our feverishly excited first impressions on Sony's Halo-humper. We're not kidding you when we say that this might be the best thing ever... but then we said that about Terminator: Rise Of The Machines. Only messin'.

SINGSTAR

Umpteen stonking great pop songs, two microphones and one PS2 make for the most spectacularly funny party game since we all stood in a puddle of water and took turns holding a live electric wire. Expect to see it everywhere this Summer. Scorching!

XBOX LIVE

When we're not busy arguing with our girlfriends about playing too much Xbox Live, we're playing Xbox Live. Gotham and Links 2004 are our online tipples of choice this month. We hate to say it, but Microsoft stuffs PS2 when it comes to net gaming.

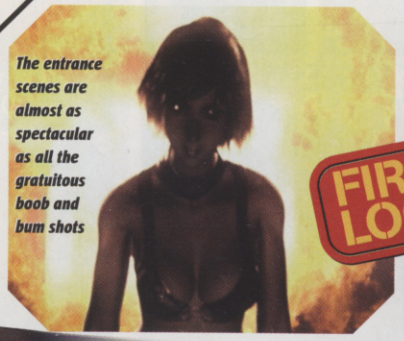
"WHEN IT'S READY"

This phrase is getting on our tits. Every time we ask developer Bungie when Halo 2 will come out all we get is, "When it's ready." Listen up! Get off your high horse, quit the excuses and just give us the damn game you bunch of reclusive eggheads!

LICENSED BY Nintendo

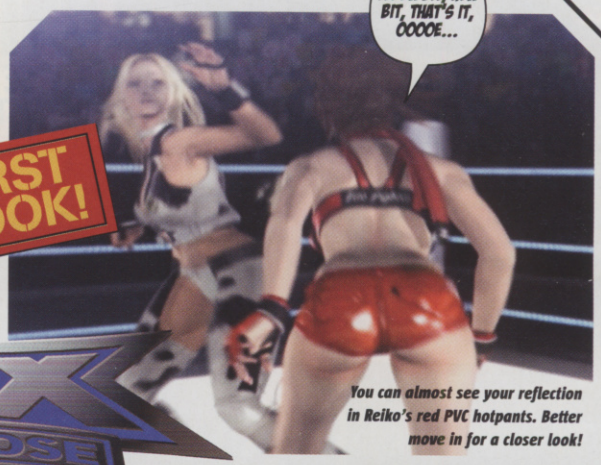
NINTENDO DS

Some people are saying that the whole dual screen thing is complete genius, but we can't help but believe that the new handheld was thought up by oxygen-starved, booze-fuelled, lobotomised gerbils.



The entrance scenes are almost as spectacular as all the gratuitous boob and bum shots

FIRST LOOK!



You can almost see your reflection in Reiko's red PVC hotpants. Better move in for a closer look!

WWX RUMBLE ROSE

NORKS AND NECK BREAKERS

COP A LOAD OF THE FIRST TROUSER-AROUSING PICS FROM KONAMI'S NEW BITCH OF A WRESTLING GAME. EXCLUSIVELY TO PS2

WWX is the first ever all-girl grappler. It's in no way associated with the WWE, so instead of sweaty Smackdown temptresses you get to bitch fight fantasy babes. No complaints here.

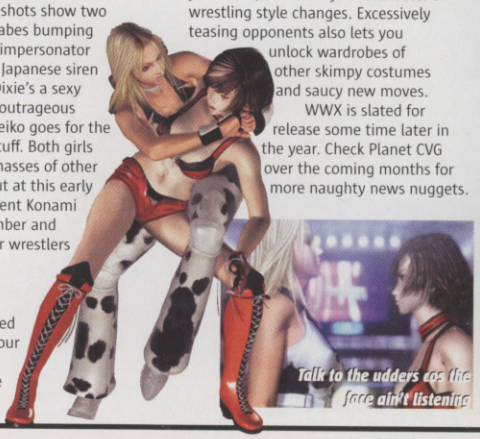
These sizzling shots show two of WWX's fittest babes bumping flesh – horny cow impersonator Dixie Clemets and Japanese siren Reiko Hinomoto. Dixie's a sexy show-boater with outrageous moves, whereas Reiko goes for the more traditional stuff. Both girls will be joined by masses of other ring mistresses, but at this early stage in development Konami is keeping the number and names of the other wrestlers close to its chest.

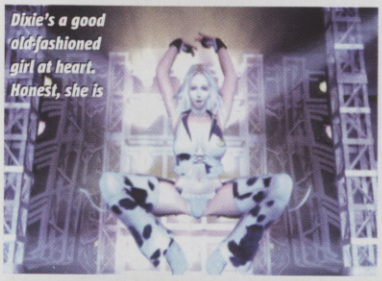
FROCK TEASE

Once you've finished drooling all over your D-pad during the saucy entrance sequences it's time to get down and dirty. WWX isn't just a banquet of booty, there's wrestling to be done and it sounds smart.

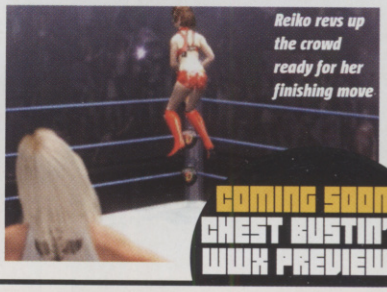
You can combine taunts with moves, enabling you to dish out humiliation and hurt simultaneously. And the more you taunt, the more your character's wrestling style changes. Excessively teasing opponents also lets you unlock wardrobes of other skimpy costumes and saucy new moves.

WWX is slated for release some time later in the year. Check Planet CVG over the coming months for more naughty news nuggets.





Dixie's a good old-fashioned girl at heart. Honest, she is



Reiko revs up the crowd ready for her finishing move

COMING SOON CHEST BUSTIN' WWX PREVIEW

THE NEWS IN PICTURES

Tommy's Travels

Illustration: Team Artonomy © Computer And Video Games

TOM CLANCY'S

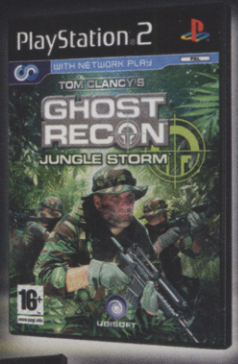
GHOST RECON™

JUNGLE STORM

"It's one of the most immersive, addictive online games ever" **Gamesmaster (UK)**

"This is the most real, the most thrilling Ghost Recon yet" **PSW Magazine (UK)**

READY FOR A RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE ?



- *Fight Cuban warlords and Colombian drug barons over 2 huge campaigns*
- *Play multi-player either online or in split-screen in up to 31 maps*
- *Give voice commands using a headset in both single and multi-player*

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six® 3, coming soon on PS2

16+ www.pegi.info

PlayStation 2

WWW.GHOSTRECON.COM

UBISOFT

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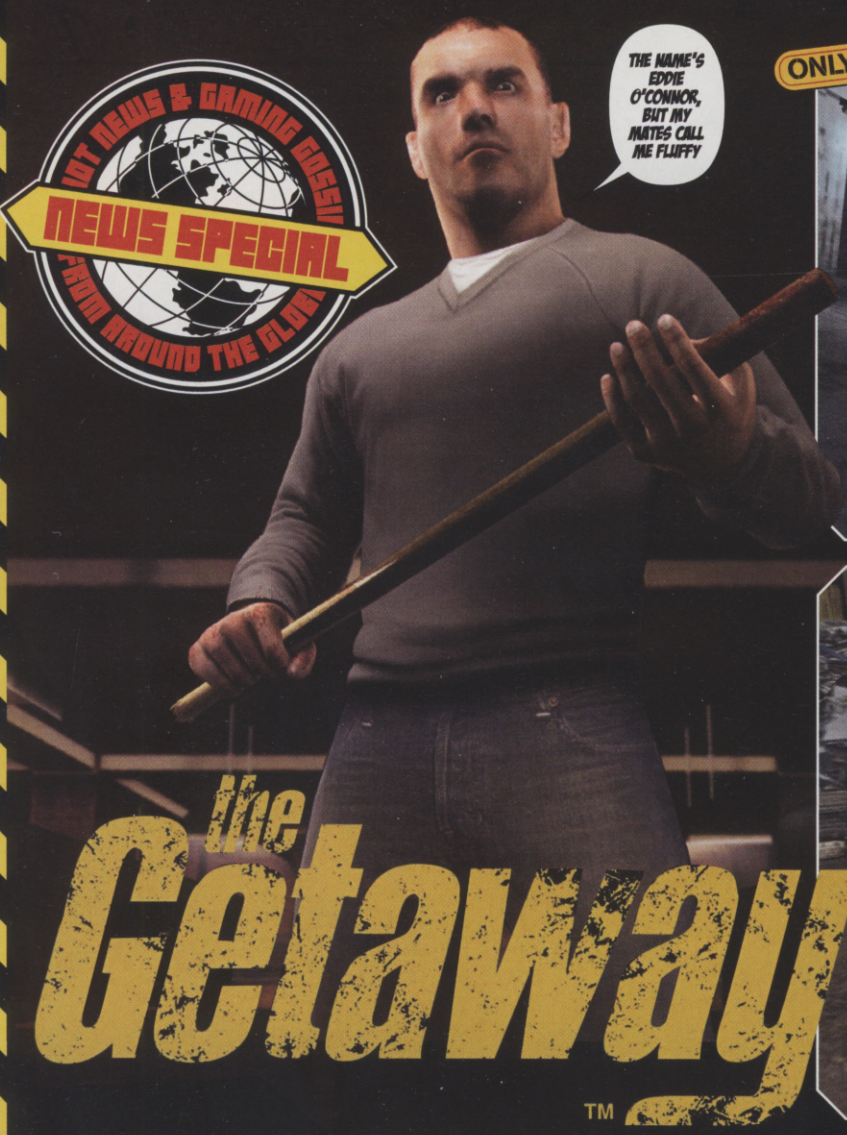
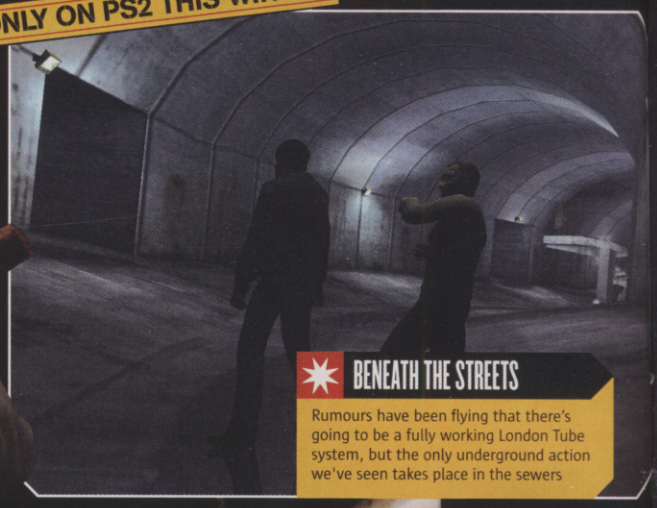
Demo version of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six® 3 is only available with the solus pack of Ghost Recon, Jungle Storm and not the version with the headset included.



ONLY ON PS2 THIS WINTER



BENEATH THE STREETS

Rumours have been flying that there's going to be a fully working London Tube system, but the only underground action we've seen takes place in the sewers

the Getaway 2™

First look

SCRAPHEAP CHALLENGE

A rozzer tracks you down in a maze-like scrap yard. You're unarmed, so your best chance is to hunt for a cheeky hidey-hole behind some mashed-up motor.

OI, MUPPET! HOLD ON TO YOUR COCKLES – SONY'S LAIRY LONDONER IS BACK FOR MORE TROUBLE ON PS2

FRESH MEAT

DIAMOND GEEZER

Mark Hammond and DC Frank Carter have done a runner.

The stars of Sony's original Gangster smash have sodded off to God-only-knows-where. There's a new fella in town, and he's ready to paint it red with the blood of anyone in his way. His name's Eddie O'Connor, he's a wiseguy and he'd have Vinnie Jones for breakfast. Little is known about him, except that he's a fine boxer, part-time bouncer and all-round hard-case about to get sucked into the capital's criminal underworld.

Jellied eels! You either love 'em or the mere thought of eating one makes you chunder like a burst sewer pipe. When The Getaway first appeared on PS2 it triggered very similar reactions.

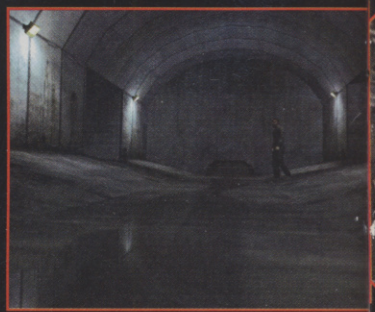
The sea of opinion is still fiercely divided, but no one is likely to puke with disapproval at what London Studio is doing with the sequel. This isn't just a thoughtless expansion on the original either. The team behind Sony's GTA rival is focussing all its efforts on making the combat and storyline tight as a Soho stripper's thong. Not to mention its plans to really bring London to life this time.

You'll never hitch a ride from there, mate

The UK capital was the real star of The Getaway. Granted, buildings looked spot on, but the streets lacked atmosphere and spark because they were so empty. Plus the missions were so linear that there was little encouragement or room to go exploring. That's all changed.

The plan is to cram the streets with activity, make the environments heaps more interactive, and give you stacks of freedom. You'll be able to delve as far down as the dirty sewers or scrap it out with shootahs on the highest rooftops. Lubbly jubbly! CVG

Although this first batch of screens only shows on-foot action, the game's director Naresh Hirani has suggested that there'll be a massive range of vehicles



We've been tipped off that the missions will be far less straightforward and linear than they were in the first game. Good

WHAT NOT TO WEAR

You're not a proper Jack-the-lad wideboy if you ain't got the right clobber. Just ask any cockney hard-nut.

Ted Baker was the designer label of choice in the last game, but in part two you'll be bowling around in all sorts of new designer threads. But if these screens are anything to go by, it appears that this season's colour is grey, grey, grey!

Either The Getaway 2 is shot entirely in black and white, or Eddie's dress sense is a little dull

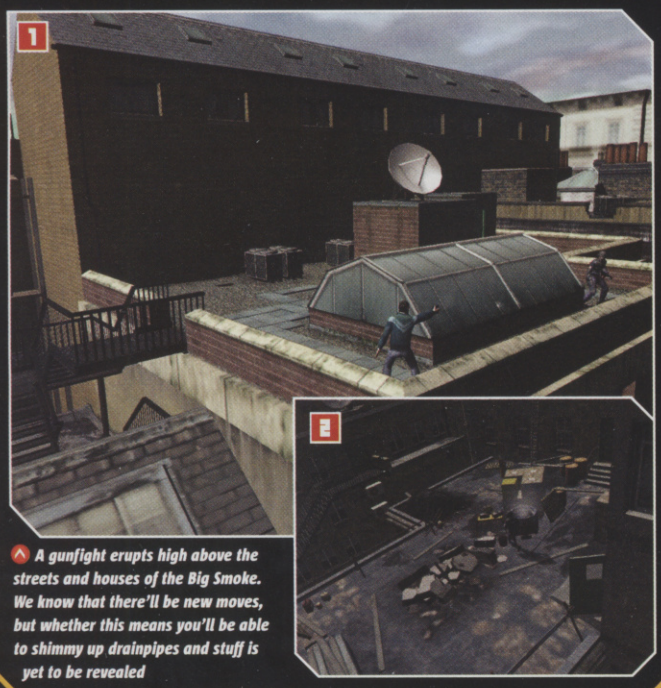
GANGLAND OF OPPORTUNITY

The world is your oyster in The Getaway 2. Well, London is, at least

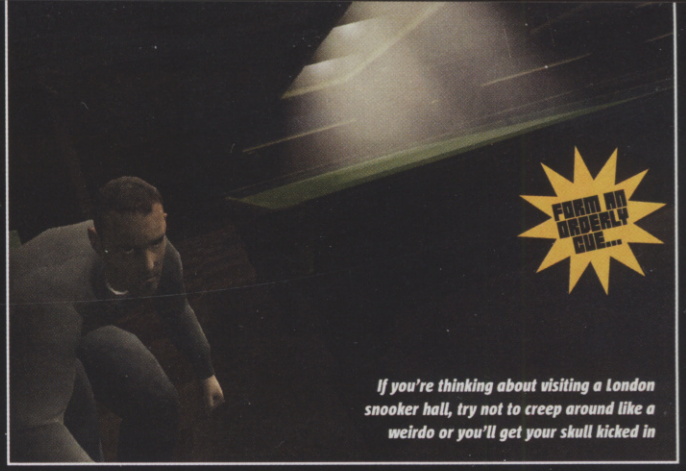
London may be a concrete jungle, but The Getaway's first take on our magnificent capital made it feel more like an industrial estate than an intricate metropolis.

You never felt like you were immersed in a real city, because there was next to nothing to interact with, it was painfully flat, and there were hardly any secret areas to search out.

Sony isn't going to make the same mistake twice. Instead of stretching the city out to the leafy suburbs, this time all the action remains in the heart of town. You'll be able to venture inside buildings, and rush up onto roofs for a spot of the rough stuff. Similarly, there'll be opportunities to scour underground areas, splash through rat-infested sewers and investigate the darkest depths of the city. It's now a truly 3D town, and nowhere is off limits.



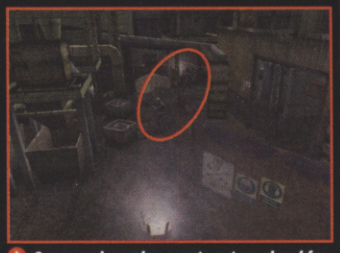
A gunfight erupts high above the streets and houses of the Big Smoke. We know that there'll be new moves, but whether this means you'll be able to shimmy up drainpipes and stuff is yet to be revealed



If you're thinking about visiting a London snooker hall, try not to creep around like a weirdo or you'll get your skull kicked in

RACKET OF PORK SCRATCHINGS

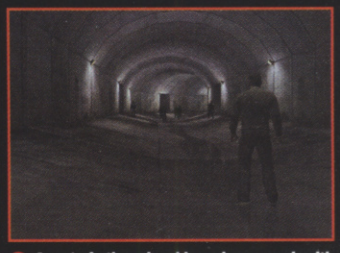
AI was a big problem in the previous game. The Police often moved and acted with all the organisation and co-ordination of a pissed-up rugby team. London Studio has channelled a lot of time into whipping London's law keepers into shape. We're not expecting huge tactical operations or anything, but it does look like the behaviour will be far more realistic. In this screenshot we can see that one of the squads appears to be moving in formation as it closes in on its target – you! Shh, keep it dahn!



One squad member scouts out up ahead for potential threats while the others move up from behind in close formation

MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

You've already met Eddie O'Connor, but rumour has it he might not be the only playable character in The Getaway 2. We all remember the two story strands involving Mark Hammond and DC Carter from last time. Well, in a recent interview, director Naresh Hirani stated there'd be more than two strands to the story in this new urban adventure. This obviously suggests more than a few playable characters. Plus there's word of a big plot twist! Better than True Crime's, we hope.



A cast of other playable cockneys, each with their own axe to grind, will soon join Eddie. Watch out for the first screenshots soon

PACK MENTALITY

Gangs are a bit like dogs that piddle on their own turf, but instead of hot wee wee they use hot lead. And the streets are about to get much messier than ever before, because there'll now be stacks more gangs fighting for domination in The Getaway 2. Sony refused to name-drop the specific groups who'll appear at this early stage. Even after a session with the CVG bat.

Check out the awesome level of detail, and the grim tower blocks in the distance poking through the polluted skies. Looks like home

Eddie crosses over a railway line, but it doesn't really matter – in The Getaway 2, both sides of the tracks are the wrong side

Eddie waits silently for trouble to come his way. Quite what he's capable of is anyone's guess at the moment, because Sony is keeping schtum on all the new moves

HOT SHOT

'A LITTLE BIT WHOA, A LITTLE BIT WHAEY'

Although you could press yourself against walls and pop out and cap people in the first game, your range of movements was extremely limited. Plus the controls were dodgier than one of Del Boy's bent deals. It was all too imprecise.

This frustrating control system has been overhauled for the follow-up and masses of new moves are being chucked into the bargain. Some of these moves will be player-specific and others will only be able to be performed in certain places. It'll come as no surprise that Sony is keeping its gob firmly shut regarding specific details, but don't fret. We'll be bringing you loads of the hottest hard facts on The Getaway 2 next issue.

Big Japan

THIS MONTH PLANET CVG PLUGS INTO THE CRAZIEST PERIPHERALS ON THE PLANET

THE CRAZY GANG

The lunatics have fled the asylum and they're clogging up wardrobes al over the world

One of the best things about Japanese gaming is the abundance of peripherals designed for exclusive use with the latest madcap game. While Western developers litter the UK with third-party steering wheels and dance mats that can be used with numerous titles, Japanese developers just love designing one-off peripherals that will serve a short but sweet purpose.

THE SOUL CONTROLER

The blade peripheral boasts bling-bling mock gold trimmings and sits proudly in an ornate black stand

Over the years we've been treated to train controllers, maracas, fishing rods, the behemoth of a peripheral gracing Steel Battalion and, most recently, Donkey Konga's bongo drums! Admit it, they're all great peripherals, but their uses aren't exactly universal – although hats off to the bright spark at Namco who decided that the Get Bass fishing rod for Dreamcast would make a great alternative controller for Soulcalibur!

While Nintendo may have thrown down the gauntlet with bongo drums, Capcom is about to go one better with its latest peripheral designed for the forthcoming Onimusha 3. Why play with a normal PS2 pad, when you could be playing with a metre-long katana sword!

Via the magic of a pressure pad and ball bearing buried in the shaft of the sword, you can hack and slash your way through Onimusha 3. There's no word on a UK release for the sword, but if you've got a spare £100 you may want to snap one up on import.

LET'S ALL CHANT

There's a new craze among Japanese kids that bizarrely doesn't involve cuddly characters or trading cards. Instead it's a chant that began on a TV show called Let's Have Fun With Japanese.

The 15-second chant originates from an ancient Japanese story involving a priest. Mental! But if it continues to remain popular, how long before it appears in a game?

JAPAN'S TOP-SELLING GAMES

1. Rockman EXE 4 Tournament Red Sun/Blue Moon (GBA) Capcom 48,244 copies
2. Everybody's Golf 4 (PS2) Sony ..... 34,883 copies
3. Fullmetal Alchemist (PS2) Square Enix ..... 25,449 copies
4. Grand Turismo 4 Prologue (PS2) Sony ..... 24,840 copies
5. Mario Kart: Double Dash!! (GC) Nintendo ..... 21,321 copies

BRAWLING BEDLAM ON XBOX

SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos has been setting arcades ablaze and now SNK Playmore's devastating 2D scrapper will be thumping its way onto Xbox at the tail end of 2004. No word of any Live multiplayer options yet though.

BOOK OF SPELLS

It's rare that we get excited about a game guide, but this month a Final Fantasy X-2 official guide landed on our newsdesk. It's awesomely in-depth and feels more like a glossy coffee table companion than a guide. You can pick it up in stores for £12.99.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

SAMMY STUDIOS IS FAMED FOR ITS BARMY BEAT 'EM UPS, NOT WILD WEST SHOOTERS WITH VAMPIRES...

Darkwatch: Curse Of The West looks like a cross between Hollywood flopbuster Wild Wild West and Return to Castle Wolfenstein. Plus there's definitely a whiff of TimeSplitters 2 about it.

You slip into the spurs of hotshot gunslinger Jericho Cross, who's had his neck nibbled by a Stetson-wearing vampire. He's not best pleased, especially as he's a member of a monster-hunting society where news like that goes down about as well as a cup of cold sick.

It's not just the freaky concept and loony storyline that make Darkwatch such an intriguing newcomer. Sammy has revealed that there'll be horse-mounted gunplay and masses of quirkily original methods with which to mash up those evil suckers.

Sammy's crackpot blaster is expected to swagger onto PS2 and Xbox at the end of the year. Stay tuned for every news snippet and sizzling screenshot in the run up to launch, only in Planet CVG.

RODEO RIFLEMAN

You'll be able to perform ride-by shootings on horseback. Also it's just come to light that your four-legged friend possesses special abilities, but Sammy's keeping the specifics firmly tucked under its ten-gallon hat for now.

Target and take out enemies as you gallop off into the sunset

HI HO JERICHO!

Having been violated by a vampire, Jericho gains supernatural powers. But when all else fails, nothing does the job like a six-shooter

DUEL OF THE DEAD

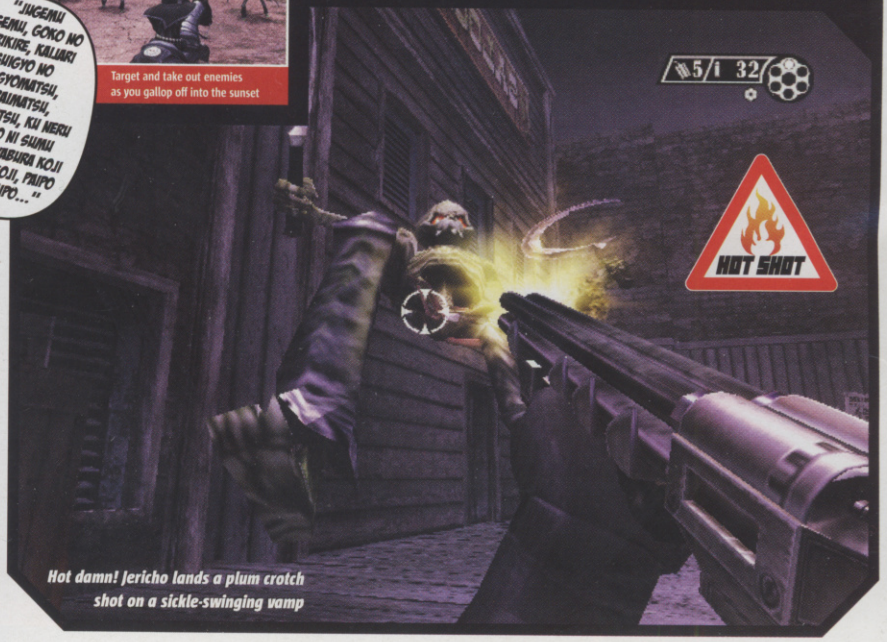
TNT FOR TWO

DUST HANGIN'

EYE FOR AN EYE

Visit www.darkwatch.com if you want to catch a glimpse of Sammy's Wild West freak show in action. Go on, you owe it to yourself to go look

SMILE FOR THE BRIDE



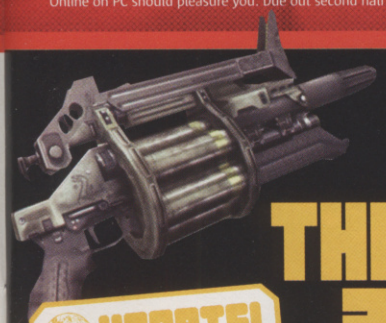
Hot damn! Jericho lands a plum crotch shot on a sickle-swinging vamp

STICK IT UP YOUR RABBIT HOLE

We thought the last Matrix movie would be the final nail in the series' coffin, but it lives on in the land of massively multiplayer RPGs – played by people who loved the films. If that sounds like you, these new screenshots from The Matrix Online on PC should pleasure you. Due out second half 2004.

BITE-SIZED BALDUR'S GATE

Ubisoft has sealed a deal to publish the GBA version of Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. Destination Software has been working on the game for three years, trying desperately to shoehorn the giant RPG into Nintendo's wee free-roaming funster. It'll launch in the US some time this year. We'll keep you clued in on any UK developments.



This swamp area is bound to be a perfect level for stealth operations

UPDATE!

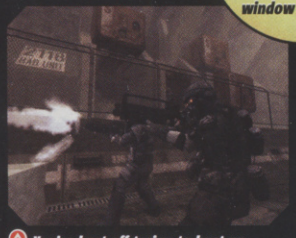
THRILL ZONE

STAGGERING SHOTS AND FIRST TAKE ON SONY'S ÜBER SHOOTER

This month we managed to sneak a peek at Killzone up and running and we're still shell-shocked. The rumours are true by the way, it *does* look just as amazing as Halo 2 in action. If you own a PS2 go and give it a little kiss, because in a few months it's going to give you a treat like you won't believe.

You've all the seen the shots of those elite soldiers rappelling down ropes from the hovership. Well, the pics just don't nearly do it justice. That whole scene is bursting with atmosphere and activity. The aircraft's hover fans kick up clouds of dust that puff out and spread realistically through the war-torn streets, and the ropes flap in the gale as the soldiers zip down into the fray. Immediately they move into formation and start reacting like a real squad. The AI looks unbelievable, and this conflict is probably the most intense and convincing that we've ever seen on a console. Add to that the cool-as-George-Clooney weapons (see right) and even vehicles (see right, up a bit) and you can see why we're so excited.

A member of the evil Helghast terrorist group smashes out a window



You're best off trying to bust up their formation, because a Helghast unit will be rock 'ard to overpower

MEN & MOTORS

Like Halo, Killzone's got its own array of impressive futuristic vehicles.

Sony is yet to reveal which you'll be able to drive, but from what we can tell there are going to be various types of solo vehicles, meaty steamroller-like people carriers and fearsome heavy artillery units. We're praying that they'll all feature in the online multiplayer modes too. As soon as Sony spills its guts to us you'll be the first to know.

TOTAL RECOIL

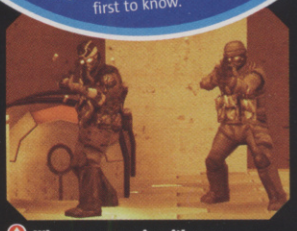
The weapons in Killzone are all based on modern gun technology, so they'll be no cheesy sci-fi ray guns making an appearance.

The plan is to make the guns feel super realistic even though the game is set in the future. So although they're more powerful and technologically advanced, you're still relying on bullets, rockets and other real-world ammo to obliterate enemies. We've seen some of them being used and the recoils, muzzle flashes and high-tech targeting systems look phenomenal.

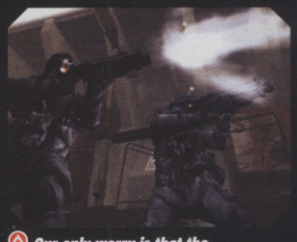
Surely this is an anti-aircraft gun, which could suggest flying sections in the game

Now that's a rocket launcher. Three cannon-sized barrels and mean as hell

This fatso grenade launcher looks like it could be fully automatic. 'Ave it!



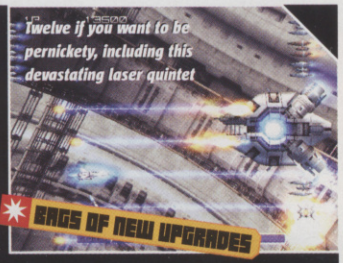
When you zoom in with your sniper rifle a funky orange filter tints everything on the screen



Our only worry is that the levels won't be as huge as Halo's giant rambling landscapes

Use hundreds of homing missiles to beat back an army of angry red planets

MARS ATTACKS



Twelve if you want to be pernickety, including this devastating laser quintet

BAGS OF NEW UPGRADES

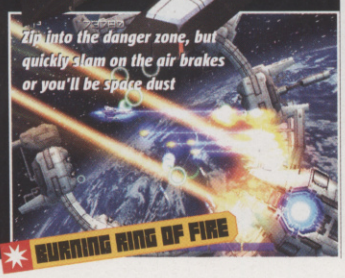
STAR PHWOARS!

UPDATE

GRADIUS V SETS THE GALAXY ON FIRE

Whether Gradius V can stand up to the mighty firepower of R-Type Final is the real test

FIVE NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS



Zip into the danger zone, but quickly slam on the air brakes or you'll be space dust

BURNING RING OF FIRE

NEO CONTRA

KONAMI'S BULLET BONANZA STORMS PS2

FIRST LOOK!

We all hoped that Konami would give its next Contra game a new slant, and sometimes you get what you wish for.

Talk of a fully 3D free-roaming title was doing the rounds. No such luck. Instead, the action mostly takes place from a top-down viewpoint, like Midway's old arcade thriller Smash TV. Out on PS2 late 2004 or early '05.

A samurai character joins veteran Bill Rizer

Shattered Soldier didn't look nearly this tasty

The camera rarely shifts to standard third-person

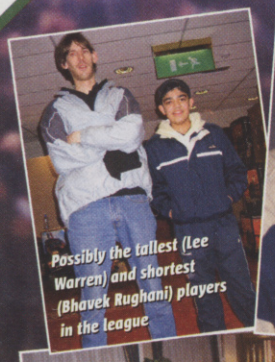
GUN AND RUN

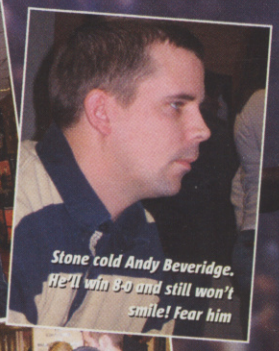
All the backgrounds will be fully destructible

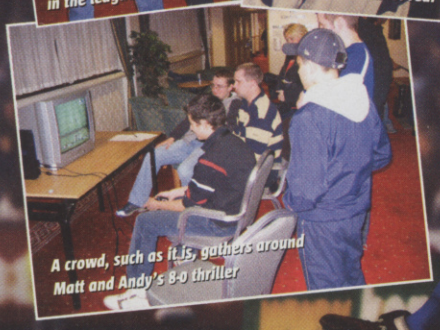
Interact with ledges and objects to avoid attacks

Go toe-to-toe with typically titanic bosses

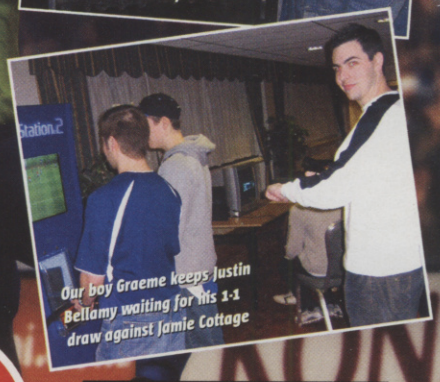
Feast your peepers on the first shots of Konami's newest fantasy offering for PS2 and GBA. It's a mad off-the-wall RPG that's set to launch in Europe this summer to coincide with the release of the cartoon series over here.


Possibly the tallest (Lee Warren) and shortest (Bhavek Rughani) players in the league


Stone cold Andy Beveridge. He'll win 8-0 and still won't smile! Fear him


A crowd, such as it is, gathers around Matt and Andy's 8-0 thriller

Evidence that the guys who play at Stevenage are clearly Nu-TrainSpotters! Gulp


Our boy Graeme keeps Justin Bellamy waiting for his 1-1 draw against Jamie Cottage

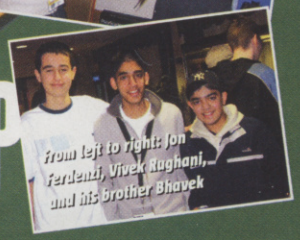
nationalleague

LOCATION REPORT: XCESSION, STEVENAGE

WWW.PESLEAGUE.CO.UK

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

GAME computer and video games KONAMI


From left to right: Jon Ferdenzi, Vivek Rughani, and his brother Bhavek

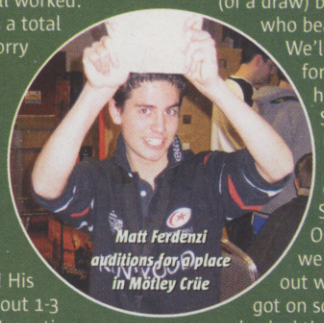
PES LEAGUE ROUND-UP

CVG GOES NORTH TO OPEN THE STEVENAGE X-FILES

Stevenage, we salute you. But who the hell are these guys? Gosh

Something weird is going down in Stevenage. The lads over there reckon PES plays differently depending on the telly your PS2 is hooked up to. Maybe playing games in a station turned everyone into trainspotters. Anyway.

Skill levels over at Xcession in Stevenage are to be taken seriously, at least. The day's talking point, and a game that drew a decent crowd, was Andy Beveridge's 8-0 thrashing of resident whipping boy Matt Ferdenzi. Andy was in control the whole 90 dog-minutes, and his goals were very well worked. Even though Matt's a total clown, we all felt sorry for him, so he got himself a copy of Silent Hill 3 – should've gone to Andy for being so slick, but that's sportsmanship for you.


Matt Ferdenzi auditions for a place in Motley Crüe

Yeh, anyway, Matt: What a joker! His French squad went out 1-3 to Vivek Rughani's Argentina (after which he tried planting Vivek with a kiss!), but managed to go home with pride intact with a one-apiece draw with Lee Warren's searching squad of Gauls. In fact Lee – who is far too tall for his own good – had a whole day of draws, apart from when he was robbed (of a draw) by Robert Cottage who beat him 1-0.

We'll say one thing for Lee, though, he's a good bloke. So better luck next time.

We had a great time in Stevenage, cheers. On the way home we couldn't figure out why everyone got on so well. Then we checked the surnames and realised that everyone is sort of related – so many pairs of brothers. So, cool – fun for all the family we guess. No Mums and Dads though, ever, please!

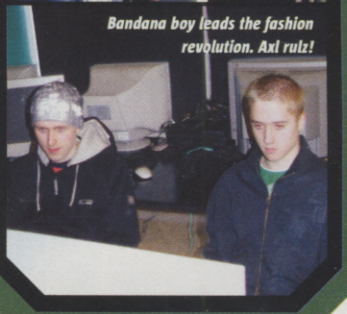
PES LEAGUE CONQUESTS: JANUARY 2004

Checking in with the month's high scorers and top performers from the league: In Harrow, an unflappable Khalid Mohamed El-awel notched up 8-0 and 6-1 victories using his favoured French. And there are some great players in that Harrow league! Over in Cardiff Jonathan Francis took down one of the league's best players, Dan Maidment, 3-0 (Brazil v Holland).

Finally an honorary mention must go to Rob Mcfarlane in Edinburgh who lost 7-0 to Jim Shearer, and lost again 7-0 to Stuart Cronin. That's some kind of bad luck, Bobby. Games of this calibre are taking place every weekend, so make sure you stay in touch at www.pesleague.co.uk. See you next month.

Nice of Roy Keane to make it along...

Come on dude, wiping your nose on your hand then shaking just isn't kind


Bandana boy leads the fashion revolution. Axl rulz!

SAY NO TO ANIMAL TESTING!

HELIUM BUNNY

HARE - CICLE

TUG - O - RABBIT

...and more

Whiplash™

www.whiplashgame.com

Out in February 2004

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON TO STOP THIS EVIL

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

PlayStation.2

XBOX

eidos

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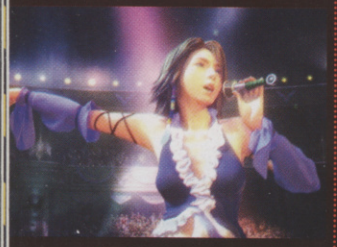
The HOT SEAT

SQUARE ENIX PRODUCER YOSHINORI KITASE GIVES THE INSIDER GOSSIP ON FINAL FANTASY X-2



Q CVG: Can you give us an idea of the premise behind the story in this game?

A KITASE: *Countless fans were touched by the story of the pilgrimage of the young summoner Yuna, who was willing to sacrifice her life in order to defeat the mysterious force known only as Sin. Japanese fans of the game were treated to an epilogue with the inclusion of Another Story on the bonus disc of FFX International, released in January 2002. This gave tantalising hints as to what happened after the conclusion of the story. After hearing from fans that they wanted to know what happened next, the decision was taken to create a sequel for the first time in the history of the Final Fantasy series. A remastered version of Another Story will be released in Europe this September under the name Eternal Calm, Final Fantasy X-2: Prologue. It will be part of the special edition of Unlimited Saga, and will be published by Atari.*

Q CVG: How do you keep the plot, the script and the dialogue taut and exciting in a game that can take upwards of 50 hours to complete?

A KITASE: *The first thing is to look at the game as a whole, and get a solid idea of exactly how we want people to play it. The basic concept can be explained by breaking it down into four main stages. Preparatory stage: the player learns the basic game system.*

Middle stage: the player develops their characters and focuses on characters and abilities that they favour. Broadening stage: more and more abilities, such as summons, become available to the player, widening the scope of the gaming experience. Final stage: the player makes their own particular choices about how to approach the game, finding their own personal strategies and undertaking the quests they choose.

As far as the script and plot go, we try and think about it in the same way, imagining how long it will take for the player to get bored, and working back from our idea of the game as a whole to spread the events out over time.

Q CVG: What about all the amazing CGI cutscenes? They've got to rock, right?

A KITASE: *FF games have so far been best known for their use of CG movies for big spectacular scenes of battles – which there have been a lot of. Players tend to focus mainly on these as well, but in truth, there is another very important feature of many of the CG scenes in FF games: dance.*

In FFVIII there was the scene at the ball and the Sorceress Parade scene. In FFX there was of course the sending, which was more of a Japanese-influenced dance. As far as FFX-2 is concerned, we have been more reserved with the spectacular scenes, but the song and dance scenes are of a higher quality than anything we have done before.

"THE SONG AND DANCE SCENES ARE OF A HIGHER QUALITY THAN ANYTHING WE HAVE DONE BEFORE"

Q CVG: Before you go, there's one thing we'd like clearing up: can you tell us why Square Enix decided to make an animated movie based on the happenings of the hugely popular Final Fantasy VII, rather than a brand new game?

A KITASE: *The reason is because FFVII was the title the creators were most passionate about, and which had the greatest imaginative scope for the story.*

xbox LIVE

LIVE DANGEROUSLY

Look out for next month's Challenge CVG Xbox Live showdown. You can win an Xbox, a Live Starter Pack and a copy of Counter-Strike. Flip to p22 for details.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Makoto Osaki, Director of Sega's AM2 studio revealed news of VF5 earlier this week, but didn't mention which formats it'll be on. An Xbox Live version, please.

Up close, the battles are completely brutal

Don't ignore the more mundane aspects of your city, such as farming and construction

GOOD GOD, IT'S GENIUS!

BLACK & WHITE 2 SET TO TAKE GAMING FREEDOM TO HEAVENLY NEW HIGHTS

Ever wanted to have complete freedom in a game? Well your prayers may yet be answered.

As god of the Greeks you'll have to lead your people to world domination either by violent or peaceful means, while nurturing a baby creature (wolf, lion, cow or ape) into a 30m tall helper.

However, along the way you're free to be as good, evil, destructive or imaginative as you like, with the game moulding itself completely to your playing style.

SPANK THE MONKEY

Once they're all grown up, opposing creatures will be able to get into rucks, with each species boasting unique combat styles. Not only that, but should they end up grappling on the floor of a city, they'll wreak untold destruction to the surrounding area.

If these massive beasts go to ground inside a city, it's gonna be utter carnage

BLOODY MIRACLE!

As you're a deity, you'll have the power to cast miracles. These will be divided into Everyday miracles, such as fireballs and healing, and Epic miracles, like devastating earthquakes, violent volcanoes and Sirens who seduce enemy soldiers and lead them to their deaths.

Epic miracles are stunning to watch, especially when they involve semi-naked women

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

The secret's in the physics. You'll be able to manipulate every object in B&W2 any way you desire!

Want to make a giant catapult out of a rock and a tree? No problem. How about creating a water-filled pit in which to drown POWs, or starting a landslide to crush your enemies? You got it. B&W2 is one of the most revolutionary games on any platform, ever, and may God strike us down if we're lying... Well, we're still here aren't we?

If these massive beasts go to ground inside a city, it's gonna be utter carnage

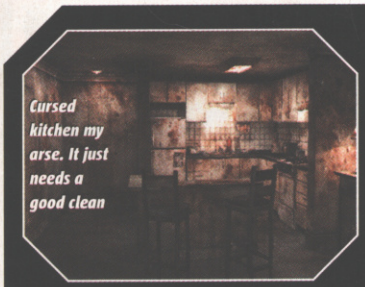
NEXT MONTH
KEEP 'EM PEELED FOR A FULL-ON CVG PREVIEW

BACK UP TO SCRATCH

Last month we brought you news of a service where you send your scratched games away to be mended. Now there's a service offered by PerfectPlay where you can go into any of the UK stores listed at www.perfectplay.co.uk and have them mended while you wait.

EYETOY: HEAD TRANSPLANT

A company called Digimask has announced plans for software that will enable you to use EyeToy to take photos of your head and turn it into a 3D model that can be implanted into any compatible games.


Cursed kitchen my arse. It just needs a good clean

The environments look more detailed than before

Didn't Laurence Lewelyn-Bowen use this motif in Changing Rooms?

FIRST LOOK!

KING OF THE HILL

THE SICKEST SURVIVAL HORROR SHOW IS BACK WITH MORE BOWEL-RUPTURING ANTICS

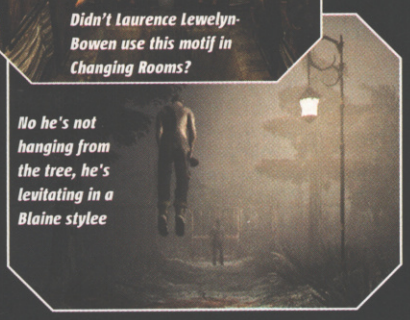
This month Konami exposed Silent Hill 4: The Room to the world, and it took five washes to get the monster skiddies out of Mike's pants.

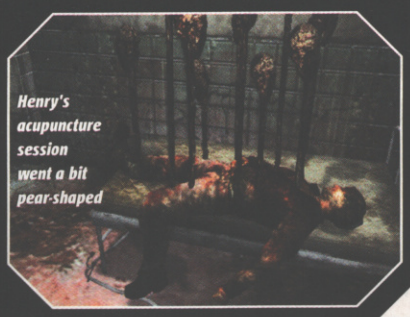
On the surface the fourth game in the saga looks scarily similar to the others, but The Room (crap name, huh?) mixes things up and takes you to into darker unexplored territories.

Henry Townsend is Silent Hill's new hero. He's trapped in his cursed apartment, and in an effort to escape he discovers bizarre portals into hellish alternate realities. As you can guess, these are crawling with mutilated monsters galore.

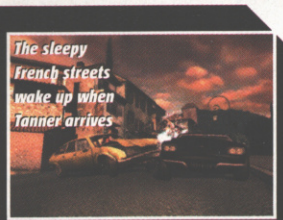
The team has created new effects to increase the tension and atmos to suffocating levels. The environments alter as you zap between worlds, and the action shifts from third to first-person to up the chill factor in ultra-claustrophobic situations.

Silent Hill 4 is expected to hit PS2 and Xbox sometime between Christmas 2004 and the end of Spring 2005.

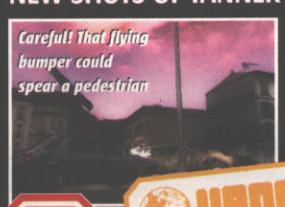

No he's not hanging from the tree, he's levitating in a Blaine stylee

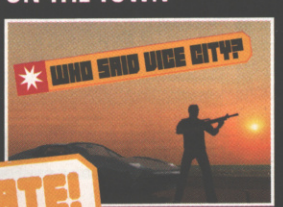

Henry's acupuncture session went a bit pear-shaped

FLYING CARS


The sleepy French streets wake up when Tanner arrives

NEW SHOTS OF TANNER ON THE TOWN

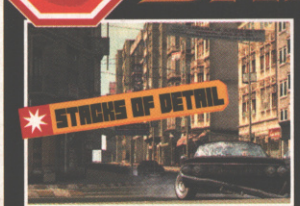

Careful! That flying bumper could spear a pedestrian

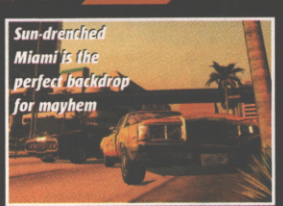

WHO SAID VICE CITY?

STOP PRESS

UPDATE!

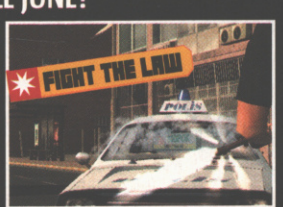
DRIV3R


STACKS OF DETAIL


Sun-drenched Miami is the perfect backdrop for mayhem

HOT NEWS! DELAYED TILL JUNE!

It's still not clear how significantly damage affects the handling


FIGHT THE LAW

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

PITCH BLACK PREQUEL STEPS INTO THE LIGHT

Vin Diesel is lending his likeness and voice talent to the videogame spin-off of upcoming Hollywood sci-fi biggie The Chronicles Of Riddick.

Primarily it's a first-person Doom III-style gun 'n' run thriller, but the action switches to third-person for stealth sections. It's coming out on Xbox in August.

UPDATE!

Vin Diesel has been involved with the game's development

Riddick shows off his monkey bar prowess

HALO 2 SHIFTS INTO GEAR

MASTER CHIEF GETS NEW SET OF WHEELS

We haven't had a whiff of any Halo 2 news for ages, but this month Bungie has managed to squeeze out a hamster fart's-worth of info in the shape of this screenshot.

UPDATE!

As you can see it's a new vehicle, and it looks wicked. Some sort of all-terrain single-man motor with a roof-mounted automatic canon.

Playtime Bullies

FIGHTING FOR SPACE ON THE OFFICE CONSOLE THIS MONTH

PS2 MOST PLAYED!

CASTLEVANIA

We're chuffed to bits that Konami finally managed to whip up a decent 3D Castlevania epic. It's got all the flavour and atmosphere of old, but chucks in a crypt-full of funky new features to ramp up the thrills.

XBOX MOST PLAYED!

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

Xbox Live is a naughty mistress. She keeps us chained to our tellies till 4am. Gotham 2 is our plaything of choice this month, and if ever there was a time to succumb to the lure of broadband it's now.

CUBE MOST PLAYED!

SWORD OF MANA

Now and again we're suckers for the simple pleasures. You don't need the pumpkin-sized head of a RPG guru to enjoy Sword Of Mana. It's brainlessly compulsive and that's enough to float our boat this month.

GBA MOST PLAYED!

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Lee has managed to rope us into Square Enix's sumptuous new adventure. We weren't too keen to start with, but the four-player action really holds up and now we're hooked. Damn him!

PC MOST PLAYED!

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

Graeme is fiddle mad! He regularly fiddles with his girlfriend's thrupenny bits, but the majority of his time is spent fiddling with men. Footballers in particular. He likes touching up their stats. The filthy swine that he is.

Charts

UK TOP 20 BESTSELLERS

FIND OUT WHICH GAMES ARE FLYING OFF THE SHELVES AND INTO YOUR CONSOLES, HOW THEY SCORED IN CVG AND WHAT THEY'RE ALL ABOUT. YOU LOT SURE ARE LUCKY!

ChartTrack

The official UK weekly leisure software charts ©2002 ELSPA Ltd, compiled by ChartTrack, with the name ELSPA acting as a link to our website www.elspa.com

POSITION	MOVE	GAME	FORMAT/S	CVG SCORE	SUMMARY	LAST WEEK	WEEKS IN CHART
1	➡	NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND (EA)	PS2 XB GC	9	EA's maxed out street sizzler triggers its nitros and stays in pole position. Best arcade racer since Burnout 2	1	8
2	⬆	GRAND THEFT AUTO: DOUBLE PACK (ROCKSTAR)	PS2 XB	10	Bump uglies with the hookers, wear velour with pride, get granny bashing, and leave all your morals on the doorstep	7	3
3	⬇	THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN (VIVENDI)	PS2 XB GC PC	7	Now that the GTA: Double Pack is on sale for PS2 and Xbox, only Cube owners have an excuse for buying this	2	11
4	⬆	LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING (EA)	PS2 XB GBA PC	7	The movie trilogy is over, and this half-arsed offering is all Ring lovers have got to keep the dream alive. Shame	5	9
5	⬆	NORTON INTERNET SECURITY 2004 (NORTON)	PC	-	Battle them bugs and zap those cheeky viruses with a single click of a button. Not much replay value though	9	4
6	⬇	FIFA 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB PC PSONE	8	It's hanging in the top ten like that Ronaldinho free kick against Seaman. Will it ever drop? We thinks not	4	12
7	⬇	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT (EA)	PS2 XB GC	7	Get up, scrub the dirt off, go to work, earn cash, go to a bar, get rejected by women, go home. Then play Bustin' Out	6	4
8	⬇	MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN (EA)	PS2 XB GC	6	We're pleased to see EA's unworthy war hero slip down the charts. To think it made it to Number One. Pish!	3	7
9	⬆	TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB PC GBA	8	Yeah, he's the king of the swingers, the golfing VIP. It's tough to tire of Tiger's latest golfing masterpiece	12	12
10	➡	TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND (ACTIVISION)	PS2 XB GC GBA	8	In the next one we reckon there won't even be a skateboard. You'll just walk around and sit on benches	10	8
11	➡	PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME (UBISOFT)	PS2 PC GBA	9	Sand's a bugger. Get in your arse it chaffs like a mofo. But Sands Of Time proves that the grainy stuff ain't all bad	11	6
12	⬇	TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA (ACTIVISION)	PS2 XB GC	8	The GTA: Double Pack comprises of two old games, but they still pish all over Activision's new bad boy	8	10
13	⬆	CRASH BANDICOOT: WRATH OF CORTEX – PLATINUM (VIVENDI)	PS2 XB GC	7	Being ginger need not affect your confidence. Look at how successful Crash has become. Then again, he's not real	14	33
14	⬆	EYETOY: PLAY (SONY)	PS2	-	We used to think that a nice carriage clock was the perfect set-top ornament, not a silly plastic all-seeing eye	15	28
15	⬆	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 03/04 (EIDOS)	PC	8	Graeme's girlfriend can't stop him playing Champ Man in bed. Let's hope she doesn't start playing away from home	17	8
16	✸	MANHUNT (ROCKSTAR)	PS2	7	So atmospheric that you can almost feel the warm splattered brains of your victims dripping down your face	-	4
17	⬇	XIII (UBISOFT)	PS2 XB GC PC	8	Ubi's stylish shooter hasn't quite run out of ammo, and still manages to hang in there with the big guns	13	6
18	⬇	MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE (ROCKSTAR)	PS2 XB PC	9	Well it's not like we didn't see this drop coming. It's in the title see! Talk about jinxing yourself. D'uh!	16	8
19	✸	HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN – PLATINUM (EIDOS)	PS2 XB	9	The gleaming bald bonce of Agent 47 comes glistening back into view. At £12.99 on PS2 it's hardly surprising. Bargain!	-	10
20	⬇	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB PC	-	You can transfer all your FIFA 2004 data into this, then tinker with your teams in masses of depth	19	5

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CVG MOST WANTED

1. KILLZONE (PS2)

Pete: "The PC's getting Half-Life 2, Xbox's getting Halo 2, and PS2...? The best bits of both in the form of Killzone. Gordon Master Chief anyone?"

2. FINAL FANTASY XII (PS2)

Lee: "Long, hard and gorgeous to look at. FFXII is rubbing my games nubbin already. Shame we won't see it for funkin' ages though. Damn those international language barriers!"

3. VAN HELSING (PS2)

Graeme: "Frankenstein, Wolfman, Count Dracula and loads of horny vamp-babes... Hugh Jackman's blockbuster is shaping up to be the ultimate monster mash."

4. SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW (XB)

Mike: "Grab people from behind, take them hostage and talk into their rear. Hold on, sorry I've just been informed you talk in their *ear*."

5. DRIV3R (PS2)

Alex: "Driver 3's main gangsta guy Tanner may look like a nob but I reckon mashing up cars will be a total crack. Bring on the carnage!"

READER'S MOST WANTED

"Hi CVG, I know you won't print them, but here are my most wanted games anyway. Andrew Cunningham." Oh yeah?

1. SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW (XB)
"Wish I had broadband to play it online. Looks unbelievable."

2. FIGHT NIGHT 2004 (PS2)
"Read your news story and can't wait to see it in action."

3. THE GETAWAY 2 (PS2)
"All my mates think I'm mental, but I reckon it's gonna be wicked."

4. PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4 (PS2)
"If Konami make it official it'll kill FIFA. Please, please, please!"

5. HALF-LIFE 2 (PC)
"It'll be the best shooter of all time. If it ever comes out."

Send us a photo of yourself and a list of the five games you're most excited about with 15 words on each explaining why. **Reader's Most Wanted, CVG, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. Email: mailbag.cvg @dennis.co.uk (subject: Most Wanted)**

DOA GIVES XBOX THE BLUES

To celebrate the launch of Dead Or Alive Online in Japan next month Microsoft is releasing a limited edition blue Xbox to accompany the game. It goes on sale on March 25 and comes bundled with Temco's titillating fighter. No word on a UK special edition yet. We'll keep you posted.

RESIDENT EVIL 4 DATED!

It's been impossible to pin down to a release date, but Capcom's finally confirmed it'll hit shelves this winter.

RELEASE DATES

CUT OUT AND KEEP

CVG BRINGS YOU THE ULTIMATE CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP RELEASE SCHEDULE. MARK UP YOUR FAVES AND KEEP THIS LIST ON YOU AT ALL TIMES...

FEBRUARY 2004

			I WANT IT
XB	CARMEN SAN DIEGO	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	CARMEN SAN DIEGO	FEBRUARY 13	☐
GC	CARMEN SAN DIEGO	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	ASTERIX & OBELIX	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	MAXIMO VS ARMY OF ZIN	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	CASTLEVANIA	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	I-NINJA	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	WHIPLASH	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PC	NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL 2	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	CRICKET 2004	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PC	CRICKET 2004	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PC	UNREAL II GOLD EDITION	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	SPY HUNTER 2	FEBRUARY 13	☐
XB	SPY HUNTER 2	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PC	TEAM SABRE	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	KYA: DARK LINEAGE	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PC	RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD (ADD ON)	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	KAAN: BARBARIAN'S BLADE	FEBRUARY 13	☐
GBA	HARVEST MOON FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN	FEBRUARY 13	☐
XB	ARX FATALIS	FEBRUARY 13	☐
GC	TOP ANGLER	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PS2	RISK: GLOBAL DOMINATION	FEBRUARY 13	☐
PC	SAVAGE	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PS2	PITFALL: THE LOST EXPEDITION	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	PITFALL: THE LOST EXPEDITION	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GC	PITFALL: THE LOST EXPEDITION	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GBA	PITFALL: THE LOST EXPEDITION	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GBA	PETER PAN	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GC	GOTCHA FORCE	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PC	OFFWORLD RECON	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PS2	KILL.SWITCH	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PS2	JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GC	JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PC	ARMED AND DANGEROUS	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	ARMED AND DANGEROUS	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	WRATH	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PC	BREED	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	DRAGON'S LAIR 3D	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PS2	PUYO POP FEVER	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	PUYO POP FEVER	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GC	PUYO POP FEVER	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PS2	SPHYNX AND THE CURSED MUMMY	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GC	SPHYNX AND THE CURSED MUMMY	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	SPHYNX AND THE CURSED MUMMY	FEBRUARY 20	☐
PS2	FINAL FANTASY X-2	FEBRUARY 20	☐
XB	DANCING STAGE UNLEASHED	FEBRUARY 20	☐
GBA	SONIC BATTLE	FEBRUARY 27	☐
XB	PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME	FEBRUARY 27	☐
PS2	BAD BOYS II	FEBRUARY 27	☐
XB	BAD BOYS II	FEBRUARY 27	☐
PS2	HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION	FEBRUARY 27	☐
XB	HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION	FEBRUARY 27	☐
XB	RUN LIKE HELL	FEBRUARY 27	☐
PS2	CONAN	FEBRUARY 27	☐
XB	SILENT SCOPE COMPLETE	FEBRUARY 27	☐
PS2	RPM TUNING	FEBRUARY 27	☐
PS2	GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM	FEBRUARY 27	☐
XB	UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING	FEBRUARY 27	☐

MARCH 2004

			I WANT IT
GBA	JET SET RADIO	MARCH 5	☐
PS2	NIGHTSHADE	MARCH 5	☐
XB	NIGHTSHADE	MARCH 5	☐
GBA	MEGA MAN: BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE	MARCH 5	☐
GBA	MAX PAYNE	MARCH 5	☐
PC	AGAINST ROME	MARCH 5	☐
PC	ITCH	MARCH 5	☐
PC	DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	MARCH 5	☐
XB	DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	MARCH 5	☐
XB	FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL	MARCH 5	☐
PS2	.HACK//INFECTION PART 1	MARCH 12	☐
GBA	SABRE WOLF	MARCH 12	☐
GC	RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X	MARCH 12	☐
GBA	DRAGON BALL Z TAIKETSU	MARCH 12	☐
PS2	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	☐
XB	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	☐
GC	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	☐
GBA	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	☐
PS2	METAL GEAR SOLID: TWIN SNAKES	MARCH 12	☐
PS2	SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON	MARCH 12	☐
XB	SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON	MARCH 12	☐
GC	SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON	MARCH 12	☐
PC	DR SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 12	☐
PS2	LMA MANAGER 2004	MARCH 12	☐
GC	ROBOCOP	MARCH 12	☐
GBA	ROBOCOP	MARCH 12	☐
GC	FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES	MARCH 12	☐
GC	BARBARIAN	MARCH 12	☐
GBA	BARBARIAN	MARCH 12	☐
PS2	SCOOBY DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	MARCH 19	☐
XB	SCOOBY DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	MARCH 19	☐
PC	UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	MARCH 19	☐
PC	SACRED	MARCH 19	☐
GBA	MAGICAL QUEST 3 WITH MICKEY & DONALD	MARCH 19	☐
GC	DISNEY'S HIDE 'N' SNEAK	MARCH 19	☐
GBA	DISNEY'S HIDEN 'N' SNEAK	MARCH 19	☐
PS2	DR SEUSS' CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	☐
XB	DR SEUSS' CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	☐
GBA	DR SEUSS' CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	☐
GBA	DISNEY'S ALADDIN	MARCH 19	☐
XB	TENCHU: RETURN FROM THE DARKNESS	MARCH 19	☐
XB	BLOWOUT	MARCH 19	☐
PS2	SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS	MARCH 19	☐
GC	MTX: MOTOCROSS	MARCH 19	☐
XB	CARVE	MARCH 19	☐
PS2	DRIV3R	MARCH 19	☐
XB	DRIV3R	MARCH 19	☐
PC	THE SIMS 2	MARCH 19	☐
PC	MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT	MARCH 19	☐
GC	HARVEST MOON: IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE	MARCH 19	☐
GBA	SWORD OF MANA	MARCH 19	☐
PS2	CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH	MARCH 26	☐
XB	STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT	MARCH 26	☐
PC	BEYOND DIVINITY	MARCH 26	☐
PC	PRO RUGBY MANAGER	MARCH 26	☐
PS2	R-TYPE FINAL	MARCH 26	☐
PS2	THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004	MARCH 26	☐
XB	SPINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	☐
PS2	SPINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	☐
GC	SPINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	☐
PC	SPINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	☐
PS2	MX UNLEASHED	MARCH 26	☐
XB	MX UNLEASHED	MARCH 26	☐
PC	BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM	MARCH 26	☐
PC	FAR CRY	MARCH 26	☐

APRIL 2004

			I WANT IT
PS2	IRON STORM	APRIL 2	☐
XB	AQUANOX	APRIL 4	☐
PS2	THE SUFFERING	APRIL 6	☐
PS2	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	☐
XB	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	☐
PC	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	☐
XB	THE SUFFERING	APRIL 9	☐
PS2	ALIAS	APRIL 9	☐
XB	ALIAS	APRIL 9	☐
XB	KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE	APRIL 9	☐
PS2	AQUANOX	APRIL 23	☐
XB	VIETNAM	APRIL 23	☐

"Imagine all the best bits of all the Castlevanias, except better. Sure to go down as the best Castlevania ever"

"Funky gadgets, sexy motors, girls and all the other Bond bits in one-stop, vodka Martini-fuelled package"

HOT PICKS

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THESE SIZZLING NEWCOMERS IN YOUR LOCAL GAMES SHACK

"The pace is lightning, the dialogue is ace and you rarely find yourself frustrated. We can't stop playing it..."

"We didn't expect to be amazed a second time around, but we were totally floored. It's got superb atmosphere..."

"Class and production values help this stand out. The puzzles are tough and original, and the game world is fun"

RELEASE DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Either my armpit's learnt to talk or my arse is throwing it's voice

MAILBAG

Send your rantings and ravings (or a letter) to: Mailbag, CVG, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. Or email us at mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

FUNDAMENT-AL

Why do you always seem to compare games to other ones? Like Mario Party 5. You gave it a 5/10 just because you compared it to 4.

Craig, Crewe

CVG *Your letter's a bit like Manhunt: starts well with an interesting premise but then disappears up its own Urban Freestyle Soccer. 1/10*

WHAT'S THE CRACK, MAN?

It's a Tekken tournament party!

Hey Cack-boy, I've got to ask you: 1. What's the crack with your hair? You ain't one of those vile mosher boys are you? 2. Why are you always walking around, wearing nothing but your speedy boots? There are children reading at home. 3. Do you gobble pills at the same rate as your cousin, Pak? If you do then you need some help, bruv. That could explain why you talk cack every month.

Keith, via email

CVG *We mailed your points to Cackman, but he hasn't replied yet. Strange...*

LOAD OF BROWNHILLS

I'm a fan of beat 'em up games and recently noticed an unusual pattern: most tend to have a storyline telling you who won the previous tournament. My question is why is it always the most unexpected character who wins? For example, Tekken Tournament has always been won by Kazuya, Heihachi or Jin. Now I don't care what anyone says – if there's a man entering a fist-fighting tournament using a sword, he's gonna win every time. There are loads of others that follow this pattern, and I don't think for one minute a man who can turn you to ice would lose to a little man whose only ability is to fly across the screen like a rocket (Mortal Kombat). Can you shed any light?

Gazmando, Brownhills

CVG *It's no good, soon as we saw where you live we forgot everything else you just said. Brown haha hills haha.*

KILLER PANTS

The preview movie for Killer 7 on the Capcom Japan site makes the game look phat, but if the playable 'demo' is anything to go by then the game might just be pants to play, which would be a waste of graphical genius. The URL is capcom.co.jp/killer7. Also, Resident Evil 4, possibly a multiplayer game? I doubt it, especially as RE Zero was practically crying out for a multiplayer option and didn't get one. Oh well, we can all hope.

Hosea

Killer 7 "a waste of graphical genius" according to Hosea

NO MUFF IN TIFFIN

Three of my letters now you've mentioned me as A GIRL. I'm not. Tiff is my nickname given to me by my sister. Duh.

Tiff, via email

CVG *You're happy to call yourself by a girl's name because 'your sister' does. How stoopid of us not to know that. Good luck with the rest of the gender reassignment.*

"Hey Tiff, comin' down the shops?"

CUBE

I wanted the Zelda Collectors' Edition on Cube, but having got a Cube already didn't really see the need for another. So this is what you do: go to your local GAME store, buy the Zelda Cube pack with which you also get a free game (think mine was X2), instantly trade in the Cube and the free game (mine was on the same receipt). Once all the minusing and adding has happened, you'll have the Zelda's Collectors' Edition for £25 (provided the other game you got free wasn't awful). Not a bad deal for four classic games.

Matthew, Surrey

CVG *Well done, you.*

POLLOCKS

Over the past two years I've noticed that the majority of games aren't that good (The Italian Job, Silent Scope 3 etc) because there are barely any people aged 13-17 working in games companies. Children have more active imaginations – if there were more working for games companies we'd have more decent games.

John Pollock

HOPE YOU LIKE JAMMIN' TOO

Great mag , but I need something cleared up if you can. In your latest issue I saw a game in your release schedule called Def Jam 2 for Xbox due in March 2004. Is this game a sequel to the highly enjoyable Def Jam Vendetta by EA? Vendetta was great, so the prospect of this coming onto Xbox is very good news for fans of the big black box of gaming goodness. If this is a sequel, do you have any plans to preview or review this game in your mag in the forthcoming issues?

Jamie Camp

CVG *CVG's chart is based on behind-the-scenes skinny given to the shops to help them plan shelf space and pre-orders. Sometimes this includes retailers' own guestimates on titles that haven't even been officially been announced, and other times it's on solid info directly from the publisher. While a sequel seems logical, as does an Xbox version, the date doesn't – we'll have more when EA goes public on it.*

CVG STINKER

She couldn't help but feel sympathy for airborne fecal matter

SOOO LAST WEEK

I was surprised to see you getting excited over Fire Emblem. I got the game on December 2nd. I've since traded it in for Lunar Legends, which ain't out here either, is it? This surprises me as the shop imported Pokémon Ruby and got caught and told me they wouldn't be importing US Game Boy games again. A few months later and it appears they are. So tell me CVG, is it illegal?

Zola

CVG: Two words: 'smug' and 'tosspot'. We could explain the complexities of securing code during non-synchronous multi-regional marketing campaigns and magazine lead times but your head would explode with boredom. And with a head as big as yours that'd be real messy. Oh, and is it illegal? Short answer: depends.

CORPORAL QUICKFIRE

Q: How far up can the Good Cop rating go in True Crime?
A: *On the HUD it's 99, but in the player stats there's no cap.*
Q: Which one, Burnout 2 or Need for Speed: Underground?
A: *Underground, no question.*
Q: Any news on SNK vs Capcom: Chaos? I heard Demitri (Darkstalkers) and Zero (Megaman) are both in it!
A: *They are. Check out www.snkplaymore.jp/official/svc/english/chara/chara_top.html.*
Q: Do you need a PC to go online with the GameCube? If not, what do you need?
A: *Only if you're hacking Mario Kart. Ninty has its own modem but only a handful of games that use it... officially.*
Q: Why don't you preview arcade games anymore? There must be some new arcade games in the making. No?
A: *When there's something worth covering, we do.*
Q: My PS2 keeps on scratching my games all the time. What's wrong with it?
A: *Worn parts. If your warranty is still valid, get Sony to sort you, otherwise get the laser checked at your local repair shop.*
Q: Can you play multiplayer GBA games using the Cube Game Boy Player with one telly?
A: Yes.
Q: What's the situation with Xenosaga? Are they ever going to release it in Europe?
A: *Looking unlikely unless EA picks it up under its new deal to publish Namco titles here.*
Q: Will there be a new Champ Man for Xbox – is it gonna be multiplayer?
A: *Now that developer Sports Interactive and Eidos have parted company, it's uncertain.*
Q: I've been playing Twisted Metal Black for two year. How do you unlock all the videos, Darktooth, Hawkwar, Minon?
A: *TWO years? Here's a tip: stop blowing your wad on porno and splash out on another game.*

YOU'RE WELCOME

I type this in the hope that at least one of the CVG staff will read it. I'd just like to thank you for printing my letter about why Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon only got 6/10 and for your honest reply.
Michael, via email

SNAKEEEEE!

In reply to Dev's letter last issue, you said that David Hayter (voice of Solid Snake) and David Hayter (scriptwriter for X-men and X-men2) were not the same person. Guess what? They are. He's even had the lead role in a movie, Guyver: Dark Hero.
Steven, via email

This is Mr Hayter: We stand corrected

ONE-TON BACK ON THE MENU?

A couple of years back you held a Top 100 Games Of All Time vote, which I had great pleasure in reading. However, at that time the only next-gen console was PS2, which gave it a rather unfair advantage (despite the fact that an N64 game won). You should consider holding a new vote of the Top 100 games. Such classics as Halo: Combat Evolved, True Crime, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City and countless other masterpieces would make a welcome entry into the final verdict. I'm sure that many others (including yourselves) would be interested to see the results of a more up-to-date vote.
Adam, Essex.

NOT 'NOT' BUT 'HOT'

Great cover on the February issue. but that's not why I'm mailing you. I was reading the Hot or Not section and to my surprise you put the Cube 2004 line-up as Not – why? It has the best line up by far this year: only PC with Doom 3, Half-Life 2 and Sims 2 is any were near as good. Metroid Prime 2, Killer 7, Tales Of Symphonia, Geist, Baten Kaitos, Custom Robo, Donkey Konga, Resi 4, Star Fox Armada, Harvest Moon... all Cube exclusive, not to mention the multi-platform games.
Omar, via email

SANU-TISED VERSION

Hello CVG, you nasty people who rip my letters to no more than a mere sentence ...
Sanu, via email
CVG *He sooo asked for it.*

STAR LETTER

MARIO'S FETISH

Mario has made some great games, but the man is a disgrace. For starters, his main goal is usually to save a princess – he just chases skirt. He has to resort to drugs, mainly magic mushrooms, and starts hallucinating that he's 15ft tall. In Mario Kart: DD, does he drive through the courses in a responsible manner? No. And I'm not even going to go into his bizarre dress-up fetishes in Mario 3. Nintendo needs to do something about this overweight, drug-taking monster before it's too late.
Egonga, Merseyside

JOYTECH

Each month's star letter-writer gets a bundle of quality peripherals from JOYTECH, so write your address clearly.

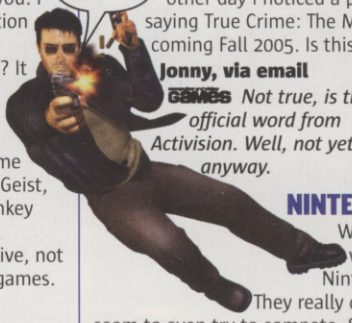
WINNER

OH GO ON THEN

What is second-person perspective ? Does it even exist? You've got first-person (Halo) and third-person (Freedom Fighters), but has anyone ever given any thought about second-person games or how the camera angle would be? Is second-person non-existent? If so, why not call third-person second-person?
Sanu, still via email

A Gamesville fireball goes wrong

IT'S A CRIME



While playing True Crime the other day I noticed a poster saying True Crime: The Movie coming Fall 2005. Is this true?
Jonny, via email
CVG *Not true, is the official word from Activision. Well, not yet anyway.*

NINTEND'OH

What is it with Nintendo? They really don't seem to even try to compete. Sony bring us the PSP and both Microsoft and Sony seem much further along with their next-gen consoles. So what do Nintendo do? They bring out the Nintendo DS (Dual Screen). Oh dear god, now we can play football from more than one angle. That won't be age we live in...
Matt, via email

SIIM FOOTBALL

My name is Siim and I am an Estonian. I wanted to say that your mag's great and I buy it every month. But there is a small problem: it arrives in Estonia so late, often when next month's is out in England. I also wanted to ask: are there any secrets in PES 2 that I might not know?
Siim, Estonia
CVG *Step left a bit Siim, we need to read your mind to find out what you already know about PES2 but something's blocking our telepathic waves... ah yes, it's called Denmark. Sorry, try www.issextreme.com for Pro Evo stuff instead.*

SMELLY TELLY

I couldn't help but join in over the state of Gamesville. When I first watched it I expected it to be crap... and it was. Considering they're such terrible presenters, you'd expect them to be good gamers. After seeing them play Marvel vs. Capcom 2 and struggle to pull off a fireball, I guess they're not. I say, bring back Thumb Bandits!!
Nickaveli, via email

computer and video games
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CHALLENGE CVG

XBOX LIVE SPECIAL

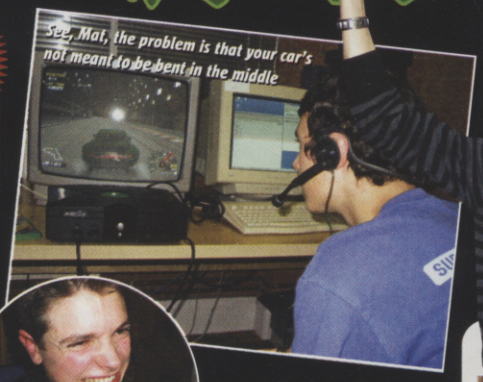
CVG JOINS FORCES WITH XBOX LIVE AND PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2 FOR THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE DREAM TEAM!

CHALLENGE RULES

Three lap races at Edinburgh, Stockholm and Yokohama. Each driver runs a Porsche GT2. Driver with most points at the end of the series scoops Xbox, Live Starter Pack and copy of PGR2!

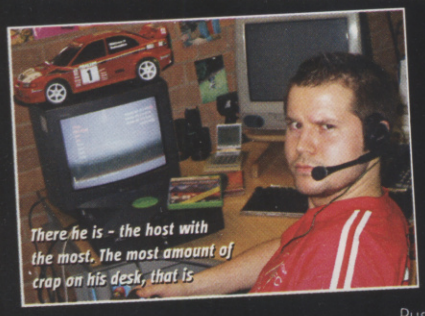
Even this humiliation wasn't enough to make Graeme go back to playing with himself in the office...

He's a forgetful lad, Graeme. He needs his name on his shirt and a car on his TV to remind him he's driving



See, Mat, the problem is that your car's not meant to be bent in the middle

TEAM CVG VS OXTED PETROLHEADS



There he is - the host with the most. The most amount of crap on his desk, that is

Crapping and playing Xbox Live at the same time takes skillz

We love playing games. It's as simple as that. And when you're as good at games as CVG, playing together is better than playing with yourself.

That's why we love Xbox Live. Slap a couple of buttons and we're hooked up with gamers around the world, mashing their faces into the digital dirt like the gods of videogaming we are. And then the match actually starts...

Anyway, when Microsoft asked if we wanted to team up with them to produce the ultimate Challenge CVG, we said, "Hell yes!" And what better way to get off the starting grid than with Project Gotham 2, the game that single-handedly revolutionised online racing?

We scoured the Live highways for some boy racers up to the challenge of taking on CVG. Oxted's high-octane street racers answered the call: Mike Heath, Mathieu Brown and Simon Pollock.

RACE 1 EDINBURGH ROCKS

"This is my town lads," puffed local lad Graeme, "I own these streets!"

"No way, skirt-boy!" replied Mike, revving his Porsche GT2. Simon shot off the grid first, sliding onto the cobbles of the Old Town with Graeme right behind. Mike and Mat came up the rear, taking chunks out of each other.

Pushing hard, our wee Scot lost it down behind the castle and watched Mike sail past into second. "Baws!" Simon strolled to first place, Mike nipped second, Graeme limped to third and Mat fourth.

Mat muses on another fourth place. Ah well, makes Graeme look good

Yeah, Graeme, it's called getting beaten. You should be getting used to it by now

Simon works on yet another twenty-second lead. He's a powersliding perfectionist!

RACE 2 STOCKHOLM STOCK CARS

"You got lucky that time, Simon," mouthed all-talk-no-trousers Grazza, adding "This one'll be Swede revenge!". Presumably trying to stun him with rubbish puns.

But Si was already building his lead. Mike, streaking ahead of fourth-place Mat, caught Graeme at the back hairpin. With shocking disregard for our man's racing line, Mike shunted until Graeme's Porsche spun out. "Ya cheatin' bugger!" screamed Graeme, but Mike was already off into the distance.

Simon streaked to another victory, Mike nicked second, with Graeme and Mat bringing up the rear.

RACE 3 YOKOHAMA RAMA DAMA DING DONG

Wet tarmac and 500 bhp don't go well together. For Graeme though, the rain pounding Yokohama's streets was a godsend. "Just how I like it," he gloated. "We invented rain in Scotland."

True to form, he reacted best to the wet road. The lads from Oxted, however, weren't far behind. "Let's make conditions even more treacherous," cackled Mike. Flooring the accelerator, he aimed his Porsche at Graeme's rear end like a cruise missile, walloping our lad's left wing and sending him spinning into railings. With nothing to stop him Simon took the last chequered flag and victory, while Mat took home the booby prize. Or The Jordan as it's known at CVG.

Graeme is once again forced to give up some wicked prizes. Poor lad, he's only got a clapped-out Game & Watch himself

RESULT: CVG LOSE!

"It's no wonder I got beaten!" moaned CVG's hapless Graeme. "You battered my motor so much I won't even get part-exchange on a Robin Reliant!"

"Face it, you're just not up to our standards," snapped Simon as he snatched his Xbox, Live Starter Pack and copy of PGR2 from Graeme's sweaty claws. Even Mat and Mike made off with a Starter Pack and a copy of the game!

"Not that they deserve it," huffed Graeme. "Cheats." Getting thumped by the cream of Oxted's boy racer scene isn't the best start to our Challenge CVG Xbox Live specials, but we'll be back next month with more prizes, more challenges, and more determination to reclaim our gaming pride!

CHALLENGE CVG AND XBOX LIVE – THE PERFECT TEAM!

Over the next four issues we'll be challenging the guys that know more about games than anyone – that's YOU – at some of Live's hottest online games.

Seriously, this is the chance of a lifetime – play us at games, prove your skills, and win some top-quality goodies! You don't even need to have Xbox Live as we'll bring you into our top secret Live gaming bunker! So what's up? Fill this in, get your parent or guardian to sign it, and send it in right now!

REMEMBER YOU DON'T NEED LIVE AT HOME TO ENTER!

★HELLO, MY NAME IS: .....

★BUT YOU MUST CALL ME ..... [nickname] ★AND I'M ..... [age]

★I AM THE BEST AT: ..... [game name]

★MY ADDRESS IS: .....

★DAYTIME TELEPHONE NO: ..... ★EVENING TELEPHONE NO: .....

★EMAIL: .....

Send to: CVG Reader Challenge, CVG magazine, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ

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WORLD'S FIRST PLAYTEST!

VAN HELSING™

THE MAN BEHIND THE MACHINES

What sort of craziness goes on in the brains of the mad scientists making Van Helsing? We've cornered producer Stephen Townshend, lopped open his skull and peered inside...

● *"The idea from the inception was to reproduce the look and feel of Stephen Sommer's vision of the film. Many of the locations are textured from photos taken on the film set."* ***Stephen Townshend***

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VIVENDI
■ DEVELOPER
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IN A NUTSHELL

Devil May Cry-style monster mashing following the plot of the upcoming blockbuster movie, featuring Hugh Jackman's stubbly face and gravely voice. Loads of guns, loads of blades, loads of hellspawn – amen!.

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

ALSO ON
XBOX

WWW.VIVENDI-UNIVERSAL-INTERACTIVE.CO.UK

How's this for a movie concept? Take Dr. Hyde, Frankenstein's Monster, the Wolfman, Count Dracula and his blood-sucking bitches, and stick them all in deepest, darkest Transylvania. Sweet or what?

But wait, it gets better. Let's have Hugh Jackman (aka Wolverine) turn up as Van Helsing, legendary monster hunter and Dracula's arch enemy. He's a Vatican-endorsed vigilante tracking down these monsters and blowing them back to hell, with God blessing every crossbow bolt and bullet.

We know, it sounds bloody great. And it's real. When Van Helsing comes out on May 7th it's going to be *the* ultimate monster movie and that's why we've used all of our beastie-hunting skills to track down the game!

MONSTERS INC.

Alright, we know what you're thinking. Just another movie spin-off, right? Another weak-arsed, half-hearted cash-in on a big blockbuster. Well, take off your cynical cap because we've played Van Helsing more than anyone outside the studio and it looks *wicked*!

THE EARLY STAGES

● *"In terms of gameplay, Devil May Cry influenced some decisions made in the game's design as well as a host of other well-designed, third-person action-combat games."* ***Stephen Townshend***

Before we had even settled in our seat we were eyeball to eyeball with Mr. Hyde, the hideously mutated alter-ego of Dr. Jekyll. As his hulking fists swung like wrecking balls at our head, we emptied our weapons into his over-inflated torso and, get this, *chopped off one of his huge arms*! You've got to respect a game that lets you kick the arse of a literary legend in the first five minutes!

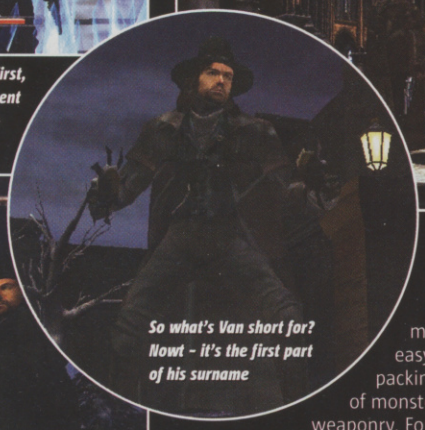
MONSTROUS NEW SCREENS! ONLY IN CVG!

▲ ***Van's the man: he can use his grappling hook to lasso flying enemies, jump on their backs, and unload his weapons...***

ROCK HARD MIDGETS!

These little buggers are punching well above their weight, but holy ammo'll sort 'em out!

Vampin' it up! They seem so nice at first, these vamp girls, but give 'em commitment and they turn into grey-skinned mingers with big bloody wings. Typical



So what's Van short for? Nowt – it's the first part of his surname

BLOOD BROTHERS

All the action takes place in good old third-person, and at first glance the game looks, and plays, a lot like Devil May Cry. Van Helsing himself looks like a total badass on screen, a straight monster-hunting P.I.M.P with his long coat sweeping out behind him and his wide-brimmed hat hanging over his dark eyes.

And like pimpin', monster hunting ain't easy. That's why Van's packing a serious amount of monster-mashing weaponry. Forget about all that holy water and crucifixes crap – Van's got the backing of ol' P Diddy in the Vatican, so he can afford to splash out on some serious weapons of mass demon destruction.

Van starts with twin pistols that look cool enough, but in the depths of Transylvania you need a little more than pea-shooters. Pretty soon he's got a sawn-off shotgun in his gloved hands, packing enough punch to blast zombies and stone gargoyles back to Hell. Later he gets a

GETTING BIBLICAL ON EVIL'S ASS
HEAVENLY WEAPONS!

The grapple hook rules. It lets you reach high platforms, escape danger, leap chasms and spear bad guys!

Van's twin pistols are pretty weak, but he looks like a cool John Woo action hero when he blasts them

He's handy with a blade, is our Van Helsing, but he's even better with two. Prepare for some proper slicin' and dicin', doll features!

In da house of God! The locations are big, beautiful and pain-stakingly textured to mirror the film sets

MONSTER MOVIE

BIG SCREEN SHOCKER!

We started following Van Helsing the movie way back last September when the official website went online.

Details were scarce but it didn't matter because we knew that it featured a dream team of some of the coolest monsters ever. Now we know the movie will be released worldwide on May 7. It's directed by Stephen Sommers, who did The Mummy and The Mummy Returns, so his monster movie credentials aren't in doubt.

Hardcore Hugh Jackman (who starred as Wolverine in The X-Men) takes the title role and Kate Beckinsale (she was in Pearl Harbor, which sucked, but since she's unbelievably tasty we'll let her off) plays Anna, fellow Vamp-hunter and probable love interest. Lucky bugger, that Hugh. The trailer's doing the rounds at the moment. If you haven't seen it, sort yourself out – the movie should be properly wick! Try: www.apple.com/trailers/

MONSTER MASH

Frankenstein, Wolfman, Dracula – it's the most awesome collection of monsters we could ever have imagined!

Not so good for Van Helsing, though, since he's got to take them on in the ultimate monster mash! He'll have his work cut out – these guys aren't the lumbering, man-in-a-suit twats they were in old horror flicks. They're big, bad, and dead keen on Van's blood!

WOLFMAN

The Wolfman is, you guessed it, a big bloody wolf with massive fangs that takes the form of a man. He's breeding a terrifying brood of Wolfmen in a network of caves and slaughtering the villagers by night. Your first encounter is a true turtle-head moment – he crashes out of a shop window and pounces on you before you can even react! And, in an interesting twist, it runs out that Anna might know more about the Wolfman's identity than she's letting on...

DRACULA

He is, without doubt, the coolest monster in history. He's the kind of guy we'd all want to be if God caught us listening to Michelle McmAnus and made us evil servants of Satan. Think about it – he's always sharply dressed, he can have any girl he wants, and he's well clever and that. He's also Van Helsing's nemesis. Actually quite a nice bloke in human form, but a razor-clawed storm of terror when he changes into a bat!

FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

As Alan Partridge said, Frankenstein's monster is a zombie. He's a type of zombie. He's a mish-mash of different bits. We gotta agree – a mish-mash of different, rotting, putrid bits with superhuman strength. Forget the 'misunderstood monster' touchy-feely whining. Bullshit. He's an evil bugger and'll pull Van's arms off... via his arsehole.

Ghost town! Action mostly happens in the deserted village of Vasaria, where the curse of Dracula is strongest and strange local customs mean Van's name makes him liable for a congestion charge

Hyde and seek! Mr Hyde, Dr Jekyll's evil alter-ego, is the first monster you take on. His breath stinks 'n' all

Retreating to the carriage roof, Van wishes he hadn't loaned his Gatling gun to CVG's Mike

Park Van's back against a wall so monsters can't come at you from all directions

sweet gas-propelled crossbow that shoots explosive-tipped darts of death. Pump a demon full of these razor-tipped arrows and they'll burrow into their stinking flesh, sticking out like spikes on a hedgehog before detonating! Eat it!

But the real daddy is the awesome hand-cranked gatling gun. A truly meaty piece of kit, this bullet-spitting bad boy churns out enough lead to make tea bags of even the biggest hair-arsed and neck-bolted enemies!

Next in van's arsenal is his Tojo blades, two discs edged with enough razor blades to keep Gillette in business for years. Van can grip these bad boys in his fists for some hardcore close-up carnage or chuck them at enemies like spinning frisbees of lacerating death. Catch that, blood-sucker!

UP THE ARSENAL!

"Van Helsing's only aid in his quest is his powerful arsenal. Players wield eight upgradeable weapons including dual pistols, a Gatling gun and tojo blades for melee combat!" **Stephen Townshend**

KILLER HOOKS

Finally, nestled in the last pocket of Van's natty overcoat is his prized possession – his gas-propelled grappling hook. Need to get out of trouble quick? Fire this little beauty into a nearby wall and reel yourself to safety. Be warned, though – it kicks like a bungee rope at full tension, so you'll need to hold onto your hat.

The grappling hook also comes in handy for reaching inaccessible areas, pulling levers from a distance and swinging across gaping chasms. Cooler than that, though, you can launch the hook into a zombie's rotting belly and drag him into your waiting uppercut! It's the ultimate combination of Indiana Jones' bullwhip and Mortal Kombat scrapper Scorpion's spear-on-a-rope.

Combating hordes of the undead is made managable with a shoulder-button lock-on. Van can

Van da man! Van Helsing looks and sounds exactly like our favourite Aussie actor, Hugh Jackman. He could kick Russell Crowe's arse any day

Rumours of a fly-vampires-through-hoops training section are bollocks

The Gatling gun is by far the most powerful weapon in the game. You can even upgrade it so that every barrel fires at once!

EVIL EXPERIMENTS

● *"We were constantly sending builds of the game to the filmmakers for feedback. Often, the game's development schedule led the film, and on occasion the filmmakers were able to draw inspiration from aspects of the game that had already been created."* ***Stephen Townshend***

also roll in any direction to quickly evade enemy attacks, but it's not just defensive – in one of the coolest moves we've seen, he pops up into a mid-air roll and fires his shooters while upside down. Looks the business and is guaranteed to outfox even the trickiest devil-spawn!

MONSTER TALES

● *"Our story diverges slightly from the movie but was approved by the filmmakers, and Hugh Jackman and other cast members performed the voices of their characters."* ***Stephen Townshend***

Looking cool is important because, like DMC, Van Helsing rewards your carefully choreographed carnage. A simple kill-chain system encourages flamboyant demon-dispatching, and as long as you keep creaming bad guys within the time limit your chain rises. Keep it up and Van can bust out his sweetest weapon – an ornate crucifix with razor-sharp edging. When a demon's at its most vulnerable Van can plunge this little God-bothering beauty into its rancid head. Glorious light gushes forth from the hellspawn's disintegrating body as Heaven's power destroys them from the inside out! Praise the sweet Lord, church was never this cool!

DREAM SCREAM TEAM

Armed with all these wicked weapons and slick moves, you'd think slicing and dicing demons would be easy. Think again. Van Helsing doesn't just have to deal with your average scabby coffin-dodger. We're talking top-of-the-range monsters here, the kind that've been scaring the crap out of us in books and films for ages.

Since the game sticks to the plot of the film like flies to a zombie's

^ ***Stone-cold boobies! These sirens are right mucky tarts. They sing sweetly to entice you then flash their norks (a bit like a night out in Newcastle's Bigg Market) – don't fall for it, blast them!***

MONSTER SQUAD

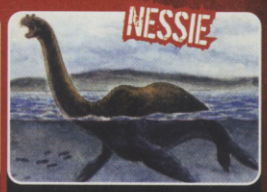
RESERVE SCREAM TEAM!

There's only one problem with the movie – it may have shot its monster load too quickly.

With Mr Hyde, Frankenstein's monster, Wolfman and Count Dracula all getting done in by Van, who's gonna terrorise the world in the sequel? Unless they escape in the movie...

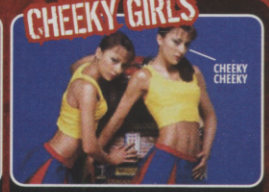
Anyway, we delved into CVG's dusty vaults to pick out the monsters we'd love to see in the next Van Helsing.

Ancient old crone, snakes for hair, and looks that really do men to stone. No, it's not Anne Robinson, it's Medusa! We'd like to see Van go up against the slithery Greek gomper in some kind of mythological grudge match.



The Loch Ness Monster, or Nessie to his pals, is a big prehistoric bastard and he's got the advantage of actually being real. We know he is because the Scottish Tourist Board told us. Straight up. Think flippers of doom.

Normally we dig monkeys and all their piss-drinking, crap-throwing, banana eating ways, but King Kong wasn't quite so loveable. We reckon Van could use his grapple hook to climb up the Empire State Building after him.



It's no coincidence that they, like Count Dracula, hail from Transylvania. Scream as their sub-Europop melts your brain! Shudder as their inhumanely skinny forms writhe in demonic dance! The ultimate horror.

Each Vamp his her own form of attack like this bolt of concentrated lightning

DRAC FACTS (HE'S BEEN AROUND A BIT THAT DRAC)

- First record of vampiric activity in England: 1196
- Vlad the Impaler, the real-life Count Dracula, born: 1428
- Bram Stoker's Dracula published: 1897
- Nosferatu, the first vampire movie, released: 1922
- First Dracula movie, starring Bela Lugosi: 1931
- Francis Ford Coppola's Bram Stoker's Dracula opens: 1992
- Number of other films with featuring Dracula: 71
- Number of games featuring Dracula: 64
- Highest point in Drac's career: Meeting hotter-than-hot Buffy. Woof!

HORNY BITCHES FROM HELL
BLOOD-SUCKING BABES!

Count Dracula, eh? Sleeps all day, parties all night, eats whatever, or rather whoever, he wants, and always has sexy birds hanging off his arms. He's like the Justin Timberlake of the horror world.

And since he's such a bloodsucking badass, Drac gets not one, not two, but *three* blushing brides. Lucky boy. The trio of razor-toothed totty pop up a lot during Van Helsing's quest, looking hot, causing trouble, and displaying an interesting knowledge of Van's, you know, prowess in the bed chamber.

But there's no time for reunions – the brides are still after Van's bodily fluids, but this time it's his blood they hunger for. The coolest showdown we came across is this mental battle with Van perched atop a runaway coach. Check it out...

Van finds himself stuck on Dracula's runaway bridal carriage. And as if it wasn't hard enough...

...the Brides of Dracula turn up! In human form they're hot, as vamps they're hellish! Shoulda remembered that wedding pressie

THE EARLY STAGES

"The idea from the inception was to reproduce the look and feel of Stephen Sommers' vision of the film. Many of the locations are textured from photos taken on the film set." **Stephen Townshend**

arsehole, you get to go up against all the monsters you'll see on the cinema screen. Mr Hyde is only the beginning – soon you'll be duking it out with Frankenstein's monster, scrapping with the razor-toothed WolfMan, resisting the lures of the seriously horny brides of Dracula, and taking on the legend that put the 'scared' into 'scarred for life': the Count himself.

But the coolest thing about the game is all the extra stuff that's been added to make Van's task even more difficult. You'll find yourself battling through hordes of lumbering zombies, being pursued by hot-but-deadly banshees and sirens, fending off flying gargoyles, and even taking on huge stone statues possessed by evil.

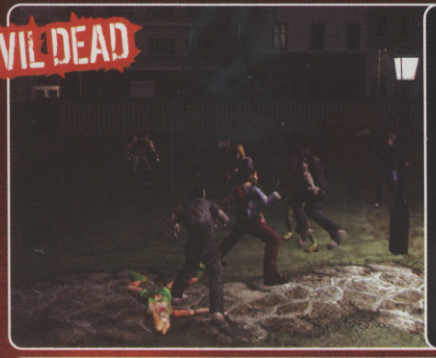
Another Bride attacks with fire, like napalm straight from Satan's arsehole after a scorching Vindaloo

MONSTERS IN THE MACHINE

Van Helsing's certainly not the first monster movie to be turned into a videogame, and definitely not the first videogame to feature monsters.

There's a rich heritage of pant-crappingly horrific beasts terrorising our joypads. So how does Van Helsing's all-star monster line-up compare with what has come before?

EVIL DEAD



Spidey director Sam Raimi's 1981 low-budget horror movie shot him to fame. Gruelling and intense, it featured a bunch of daft college kids on holiday in the woods getting bumped off by scabby zombies. The game, Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick used the State of Emergency engine to chuck cemetry-loads of undead at ya.

AAAARGHHH! SCREAM-O-METER

THE THING

John Carpenter, (of Halloween fame), scared the crap out of cinema-goers in 1982 with this story of an alien that assumes the form of those it kills. The games was a third-person shooter where you didn't know which teammates could, at any moment, turn into snarling mentalists with big claws and a dog's arse for a head.

AAAARGHHH! SCREAM-O-METER

DEVIL MAY CRY

Monster hunting for the MTV generation. Big guns, sharp swords, and threads designed by Diesel fuhchrissakes. Still, DMC introduced the gaming world to the concept of choreographed killing, rewarding you for stylish combos, and it did a cracking line in (eek) scary puppets.

AAAARGHHH! SCREAM-O-METER

CASTLEVANIA

Simultaneously gave birth to and defined the monster game genre. A classic series in every sense, and it's still going strong – we gave PS2 Castlevania an 8/10 this issue. Every monster worth their salt has an appearance in Castlevania on their CV, but Drac's always been the star of the show.

AAAARGHHH! SCREAM-O-METER

VAN HELSING

Oh come on. Frankenstein, Wolfman *and* Count Dracula in a demonic pact to plunge the world into darkness? Even forgetting the other beasts involved, the line-up is so monstrous it makes Hear'Say look attractive. Gads! Should be the ultimate monster movie – and the ultimate monster game!

AAAARGHHH! SCREAM-O-METER

These stone archangels are our fave enemy. Ten feet tall and made of granite, they're no pushovers

...but these bitches won't go down that easy either – Van has to stand and fight!

THE EARLY STAGES

"A lot of games based on movies are made solely because there are free marketing dollars from the film supporting its launch. Van Helsing, on the other hand, is perfect for a game – a combat-driven, action-packed thrill ride with a riveting storyline and some kick-ass weaponry." ***Stephen Townshend***

STAKE AND CHIPS

The storyline's been fleshed out too, so you'll actually learn more about Van's shady past than you do in the movie, endure battles unseen in the cinema, and visit locations designed especially for the game! What's more, everything has even been checked and approved by the guys making the movie, so it all looks seamless.

There's loads to uncover and unlock, too. The real secrets are still under wraps, but we learnt bonuses include special costumes, exclusive movie clips and extra monsters!

There's so much to get excited about, and that's why we reckon Van Helsing could be one of the coolest movie tie-ins of the year. It's got everything we want in a game – a badass hero, some awesome firepower, legions of the undead to blast back to the graveyard, lightning-fast action, some of the most famous monsters in history, and a truly kick-ass movie to back it all up. Sharpen your stakes and polish your crucifix. Van Helsing is going for the jugular.

CVG OPINION

DMC's attitude, style and speed plus the action and firepower of Syphon Filter – wrapped in one of the best storylines in ages. Gonna be monster! **Graeme**

WE LOVE

- *Fantastic straight-from-the-filmset visuals and monsters*
- *Some truly cool weapons*

WE HATE

- *Camera can flicks about at times*
- *Van could do with more stylish moves please*

EXCITE METER

ON BABY! / Yes! / Mmm / Tingling / Zzzz

Computer and Video Games

GET CONNECTED
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FINALLY. EXCLUSIVELY.

"Final Fantasy makes a triumphant return to Nintendo in a totally new breed of game". NOM

"Final Fantasy comes home in a magnificently magical new adventure". Cube 9/10

"Get a party of fighters round yours and you'll have a blast like no other". NGC

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES™

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HOW CVG'S PREVIEWS WORK

- PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
- DEVELOPER ACTIVISION
- OUT: DECEMBER 25

ONLINE GAMING x4

IN A NUTSHELL
Hotly anticipated, super-realistic, sneaky covert-ops sequel to last year's first-person shooter. The team-orientated multiplayer mode encompasses a wide variety of objective-based missions.

AVAILABLE ON PS2

WWW.ACTIVISION.COM

ONLINE GAMING
Can you play the game online, against other gamers around the globe? Find out here

PUBLISHER, DEVELOPER AND RELEASE DATE
Who makes the game and when it's due out, to the best of CVG's knowledge

PLAYERS
How many people can play. If it's anything from one to 32, we'll put 32!

IN A NUTSHELL
A brief summary of what the game is like. If it's an update and CVG has already previewed it we'll also sum up stuff we've said before

FORMAT
The console we played the game on is highlighted red, but other formats it's coming out on are listed too!

WEBSITE
Want more info, more screens and to see it in action? Visit this URL!

THE BEST PICS
See exactly how good (or bad!) the game looks with CVG's sweet-as screenshots

INFO OVERLOAD!
What it's like to play, how it compares to other games and whether it's any good

CVG OPINION
What we thought of the game, no matter what stage of development the game is at

WE LOVE
The good things we like about the game so far

WE HATE
The things we'd really like the developers to avoid including in the final game

WHAT THE EXCITE METER™ MEANS

You can tell how excited CVG's experts are about the game being previewed simply by looking at the Excite Meter! Easy, huh?

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES™

- PUBLISHER NINTENDO
- DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX
- OUT: MARCH 12

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It's Final Fantasy like you've never played it before and on a Nintendo machine for the first time in over a decade. Out go the stats and turn-based strategy, and in comes high-speed, real-time monster slapping.

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HTTP://FFCC.NINTENDO.COM

UPDATE!

Who needs online worlds full of pasty-faced geeks spouting stupid smiley faces? Socially inadequate MMORPG freaks, we condemn you and your idiotic hierarchies of 'noobs' and dungeon masters. If you want to feel part of a real community, you'll need to get FF Crystal Chronicles. It's not online, but it's the most pain-free way of feeling part of a wider world of adventurers working towards a common goal.

Explore one huge world with four different clans of many members each, all working in unison to sustain the planet's energy reserves. It's enough to make even the most die-hard litter bug clean up their act.

Baddies taking damage flash white. Not subtle but at least you get the message

Turn the foot markers on in multiplayer to help you make out your location

You bump into other Caravans along the road and you can trade items – there appears to be a random element to these encounters

DRESS TO DISTRESS

One of the first big differences between Crystal Chronicles and any other Fantasy is the way you can customise your own hero at the start of the game.

Seeing as the story is all about your own journey through the land as part of the Crystal Caravan, you're given some freedom to play as whoever you want to, from a selection of fine Olde Worlde family professions. You can even dress 'em how you please. Trinny and Susannah would have a field day with this lot of fashion victims.

It's pantaloons all round, no matter which costume you choose

Go for weird fur helmet or steel buckethead playing as a Lilty

No matter which outfit you pick, Yukes always hide behind a mask

Selkies are clearly the hariest, most masculine-looking clan

FAMILIAR BEGINNINGS

No matter which clan, outfit or profession you choose, you start the game at the same place. Your family will be very different though and so will your dealings with them throughout. Check out some of the cutest humble beginnings.

The Selkie farmers will miss you as you begin your quest

The Lilty alchemists need exciting raw materials from your travels

The Clavat millers get philosophical as you leave their care

MOOGLE MAGIC

This Final Fantasy is a totally different beast from anything that's been before. In fact, we'd go so far as to say that if not for the plentiful Moogles skipping merrily about the place, this would be virtually unrecognisable as a Final Fantasy adventure. As spin-offs go, Crystal Chronicles is about as revolutionary as a Friends sequel series about a bunch of homicidal, suicidal, chainsaw-wielding manic-depressives.

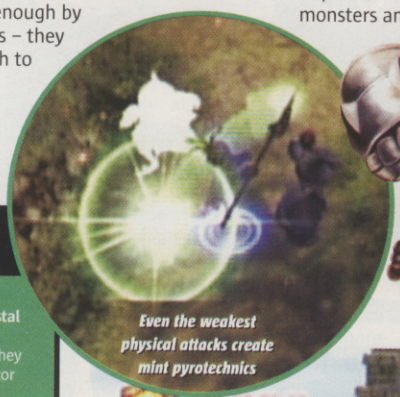
The biggest surprise is the lack of a meaty, convoluted plot. For a game series whose games have always been the digital equivalent of War & Peace, this is a real leap. Compared to other FF's epic narratives of good versus evil with their seriously heroic principle characters that act out the drama, Crystal Chronicles' tale is clean, clear and comprehensibly easy.

As a result of a catastrophe lost in the mists of time, the world is covered with a swirling lethal fog called Miasma. The many different towns protect themselves from the Miasma using enormous crystals, proudly erected in the town square. The trouble is, the crystals aren't powerful enough by themselves – they need Myrrh to function. Myrrh is milked from rare and magical trees by members of each tribes' roaming Crystal Caravan, but lately monsters have been appearing at the sources of the precious sap.

This is where you come in. You join a Crystal Caravan to help defeat the monsters and collect the goo to save the world.

It's all so folksy you half expect the caravan to stop off here and there and its members offer to sharpen the townsfolks' cutlery.

It's nonsense then, but what's surprising is that the story doesn't look like it advances much from this initial scenario. The game is more concerned with the meat of the gameplay than the story, which is great news for action fans, but


Even the weakest physical attacks create mint pyrotechnics

Send items to family members for rewards

MEET THE CLANS

Anyone wanting to play as a death-dealing robot or hulking demon from the nether realms will be disappointed with Crystal Chronicles' take on the FF universe.

The four different clans to choose from are all dead cute. They still pack a hefty punch in battle though, despite the lack of razor armour or laser beam attacks.

Most humanlike of all the clans, Clavat's are well-rounded adventurers with a slight leaning towards spell casting

Members of the Lilty clan are toughest of the lot, with the strongest physical attacks but the weakest magic abilities

The bird-like Yukes are the best at magic but have the weakest attack and defensive skills. And big noses

The lady-like Selkie clan is renowned for it's strong defences but only has average attack and magic

Your home town's protective crystal. Ain't it shiny

FANTASY FOR FOUR

The swish of Square Enix's mana-infused new broom even extends to the uncharted territory of multiplayer Final Fantasy on the same machine. It's not all that difficult to set up, but it does take a while to get your head around how it all works in practice.

The simplest way to enjoy four-player action is to select the Multiplayer option at the start of a new game (like, durr). Each player then creates a character and off you go. Easy. Here's the thing though, in multiplayer you need to play using a GBA connected to the controller ports, rather than a pad.

This is because you need to constantly play around with items and equipment, but if everyone kept pausing the action to check their swag you'd never make any progress. Instead, you manage all of your menus on the GBA screen, while the fighting and exploring remain uninterrupted on the TV.

You can have loads of characters in reserve for the quests ahead

YOUR MUM

But what if you're halfway through your collective Myrrh-harvesting quest and you fall out with your mates, possibly because you called their mum a baggy-flanged douche-bag? What then?

Cleverly, you can load in a single-player adventure using your existing character's stats and continue your quest. And even import your or your mates' characters into each others' games and hang out with them, before returning to your own games and questing alone.

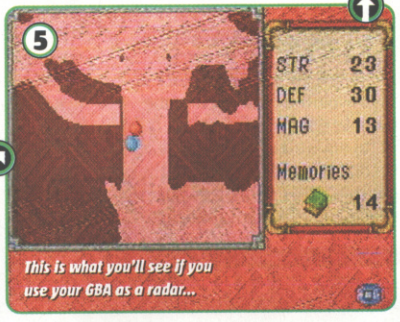
What's particularly cool is that the story never stops making sense even if you hop between different people's games at different stages of completion. You get the sense that all of the characters you meet while you play, whether human or computer-controlled, are sharing the same massive quest for Myrrh. A quest that stretches way beyond just you, some mates and a GameCube...

The sucky thing about multiplay is that one person has to carry the chalice around

Put the chalice down though so that the merry carnage can be enjoyed by all

... and here's a breakdown of your favourite edibles for recovery

With spells that deal this much hurt it's lucky that friendly fire is set to 'off'



This is what you'll see if you use your GBA as a radar...

The first tough boss gives you an indication of the struggles ahead

may cause gripes with RPG purists. Essentially, Crystal Chronicles is a simple dungeon exploring game. You choose where you want to go from an overhead map, prepare your items and commands for battle and then get scrapping. In single-player mode your Moogle buddy Mog helps you out by carrying

'Stop' magic freezes enemies for easy hits

The Gravity spell works best against flying beasties

Wash and treat Mog nicely and he gets frisky

A giant man-eating plant? In a role-player? How unusual!

Dungeon-specific items like these gate keys pop up as puzzles

The weight of your hero and the chalice operate these points

a chalice of Myrrh to protect you from the Miasma. This means that movement is restricted to a spherical area around the chalice. Explore outside the sphere and you take damage.

DUNGEONS AND DRAGOONS

It's understandable for multiplayer games where you need to stick together, but why not let players split up and explore to solve puzzle? Seems a bit of a wasted opportunity to us. And in single-player it seems useless, even if Mog makes a fairly good job of keeping up with you. The restricted movement is frustrating when playing solo.

Big sword, cutesy furry freak - the FF roots are still there

Monster battles are fought in real time with the different actions in your command list selected by cycling through them with the shoulder buttons. This is a mechanic designed for making playing on GBA possible, but, again, it's frustrating. It's often impossible to land a blow then follow it up with a swift parry because you physically can't cycle through the commands fast enough.

Exploring the lush levels is compelling though, thanks to the lightning pace of the fights and the spectacular spells you can unleash. This is true of the boss fights too. Planet-sized enemies with health bars longer than the stretched-out intestines of a particularly obese Bahamut dragon lie in wait at the end of each dungeon. Fighting them is like a fireworks display in your TV. These fights are tougher than sun-dried donkey jerky, but succeed and you can sort through the booty claimed during your quest.

STINGY WHINGE

Crystal Chronicles also does away with traditional levelling up. Instead you are allowed to keep one of the special artefacts pillaged on the mission. These are imbued with special traits, like boosting your defence or attack abilities, or adding an extra heart to your life bar or an extra slot to your command list. It's a good system, but it's a bit stingy. However, at least you can keep all of your gold, Magicite and items found to trade in town or carry into the next dungeon.

All of these changes make the game feel less like a Final Fantasy adventure and closer to Cube's other big role-player Lost Kingdoms. No bad thing if you like your action to have a swifter pace, which a lot of us do.

From a Final Fantasy fan's standpoint this is shaping up to be a curious addition to their beloved series, and one that will no doubt prove controversial. From a more general role-player fan's viewpoint this is looking a lot more promising, with abyssal depth found not in the story, but in slowly advancing your characters' skills, playing through the story with mates and all the added playability that entails.

DULL, BUT INVALUABLE

Okay, so you're not going to buy FFCC for its menu screens. Nevertheless, you need to master the basics of 'fusing' Magicite elements if you want to boost your repertoire of spells beyond puny flash-bangs.

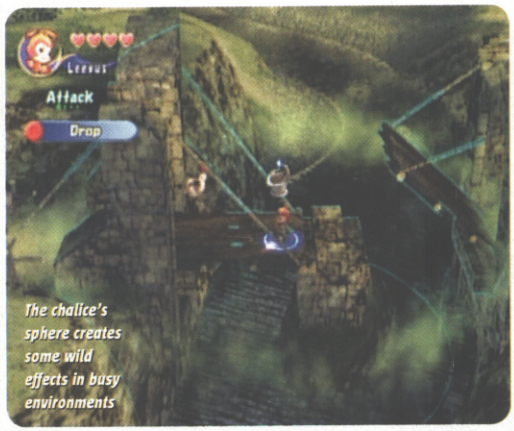
You'll need to experiment with fusing different Magicites together to find new spells too. Here's how it's done. It's not our fault it doesn't look very exciting.

Individually, the Life, Thunder and Fire spells work pretty well

Fusing Life and Thunder lets you slow enemies down and is more powerful

Fuse all three Magicites for the even more devastating Stop command

Mog offers words of advice, but no actual physical help. The furry idiot



The chalice's sphere creates some wild effects in busy environments

Will you give up your crystal ball not knowing its power?

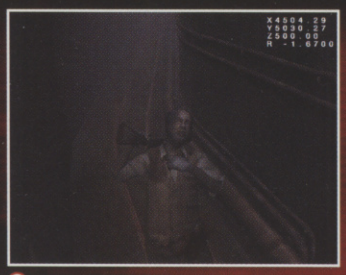
CVG OPINION

Fairly standard dungeon-crawling role-player, not typical FF. Deep, beautiful, quirky and lovingly crafted, but maybe not quite as cool as other RPGs. **Lee**

WE LOVE
- Multiplayer options are ace
- Beautiful game world
- Real time fights rock

WE HATE
- Controversial restrictive battle arena
- No sweeping, epic story

EXCITE METER



If you get hit you die horribly quickly

Your partner will occasionally turn up something useful that you may have missed

Wait for the miserable townsfolk to clumsily prepare their weapon then batter them!

The population of Hanyuda woke up dead, and boy are they ever pissed!

TM

FORBIDDEN SIREN

PUBLISHER
SONY
DEVELOPER
SCEJ
OUT MARCH

ONLINE GAMING

IN A NUTSHELL

Complicated but beautifully presented new take on the survival horror theme. It has the might of Sony behind it so expect everyone to be talking about Siren if they're not doing so already.

AVAILABLE ON

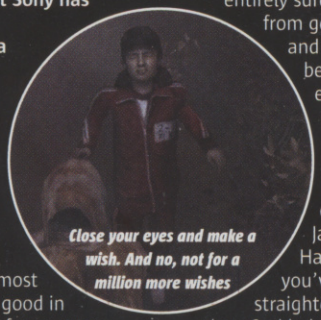
PS2

WWW.FORBIDDEN-SIREN.COM

There's a razor-thin line between scary and stupid, as anyone who saw Jason X will tell you. When it comes to choosing scary movies you need to cherry-pick the best, but on console choice is severely limited. The good news is that Sony has alerted us to its first survival horror epic, a game comprising of many stories rolled into one with Forbidden Siren.

Siren is its own festering brand of grim, and is almost too smart for CVG to handle. Which, if anything, makes it almost too smart for its own good in our opinion! Instead of one or two characters to survive one bad situation you get 10 misfits, unwittingly assisting each other in a series of around 70 jumbled up scenarios. It's intended to be confusing, and that scares us to begin with (as well as making us confused).

Everyone is gorging on Siren like a bunch of zombies on fresh brains because it looks so realistic. It also looks spooky as hell, and that's kind of a coincidence because maybe this is hell. Or maybe it's something completely different. You're given so many hints at something sinister going on, but never enough to be entirely sure. But to keep you from going completely crazy and smashing up your bedroom Sony is kind enough to throw you a couple of bones to gnaw on. Number one is that the nightmare world is centred on a fictitious Japanese village called Hanyuda. Secondly, you've three days to straighten things out. Beyond that, God help us all.



Close your eyes and make a wish. And no, not for a million more wishes

YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD-LOOKING (FOR A GHOUL)

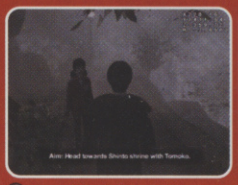
Aside from the mind-messer that is Siren's twisty-turny storyline, you've the added tension of being all-seeing and all-knowing. It's not enough to be responsible for the actions of your character (whoever it happens to be at the time!). What matters most is

HOW TO PULL GIRLS

Control over anything other than yourself is handled by a context-sensitive menu. If you're escorting a young lady, for example, she'll need spoken instructions and physical assistance.

All options appear on a drop-down menu, but your positioning needs to be precise or it doesn't work. Any item you interact with is handled the same way. It's clever, but we're wondering if it's really the best way.

More often than not the girls who follow you around don't help - they're simply feckin' useless and annoying! Stop blubbing!



Good job she's wearing a tracksuit, the aim of this mission is to RUN LIKE HELL!

This girl's cute, so we didn't mind showing her around this spooky old hood

You might find it easy to clamber around but these girls aren't as tough as you

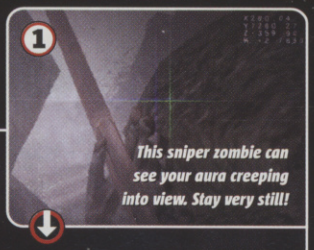
It's one of those games where you run around pressing X to see what you can do

It tells you what do to. And, er, it's the only thing you can do

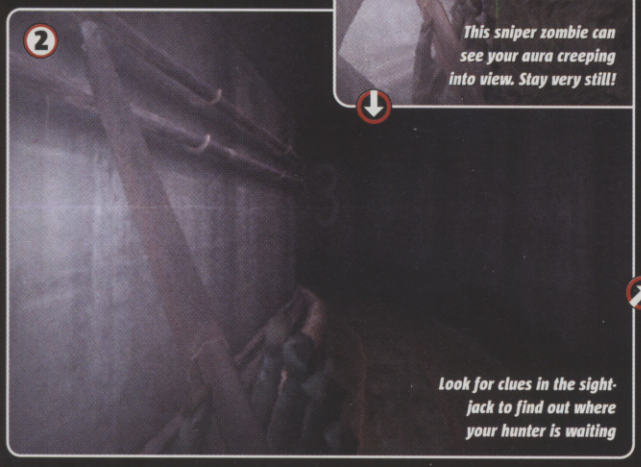
VOICES INSIDE MY HEAD

Before you twitch so much as your butt, check out what's showing on psycho TV.

Flick the L2 button to enter Sight-Jack mode, and view the world through the eyes of zombies. Whatever you do, don't walk into any situation blind!

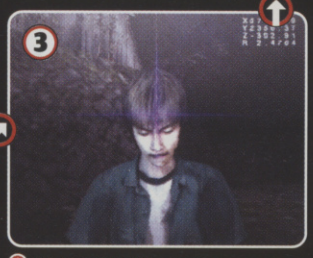


This sniper zombie can see your aura creeping into view. Stay very still!

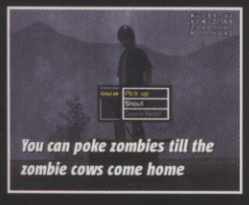


Look for clues in the sight-jack to find out where your hunter is waiting

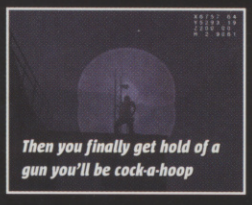
Sometimes it's hard to tell where you are in relation to zombie scumbags



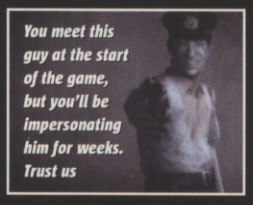
When you're with a partner, you can even see through their eyes



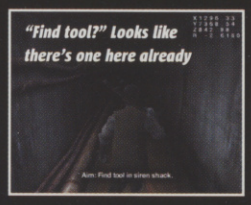
You can poke zombies till the zombie cows come home



Then you finally get hold of a gun you'll be cock-a-hoop



You meet this guy at the start of the game, but you'll be impersonating him for weeks. Trust us



"Find tool?" Looks like there's one here already

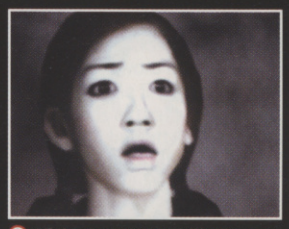
who's got their eyes on you, and where they are in relation to you. It's often the case that you can't walk a few paces without being gunned down in less time than it takes to say 'bollocks, not AGAIN!'

The trick is to time your moves to coincide with when the enemy is distracted or simply looking the other way. This is achieved through the 'sight-jack' ability, literally jacking into another person's sight. Press the L2 button to surf the psychic airwaves and tune into minds, same as radio stations. For example, there's a guy looking to gun you down from a rooftop as you walk along a road. Only way you're going to get by is view the road through his eyes, wait until he starts messing with his gun or whatever, then exit Sight-Jack mode to make a run for it.

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF

Siren mixes things up every step of the way to shake you up. Sometimes you defend with a crude weapon such as a spanner or poker, others you're totally defenceless. At least half the time you're responsible for the safety of another person, and most of the time this is a timid girl relying on you for safety. It's in the cases where you play the protector that you rely the most on Siren's unconventional control system.

When you play for the first time you'll understand why we say its success will stand or fall on the controls. Siren is bursting with challenging ideas suggesting that intelligent thinking is your best weapon. However you need reliable controls when the odds are against you that are as quick to respond as your brain is to react to danger. Right now we're not convinced this is the case. Basic movement and combat moves are slow, and when you want to interact with the environment – to flip a switch or pick up an item – the menu system over complicates things. But, hey, maybe this is all part of the plan to keep the stress levels as high as they can go... CVG



All the characters look life-like, but the voice acting is a bit Alan Partridge

Hmm, grab flare? Nope, think I'll just shout

CVG OPINION

We're so tied up in knots, we don't know whose arse is in whose face. Confusing? Hell yeah! As for the game, we need to give it more time. **Paul**

WE LOVE

- Moody atmosphere
- You really don't know how things are gonna turn out

WE HATE

- Menu system is kinda over-complicated
- Hard-to-like characters

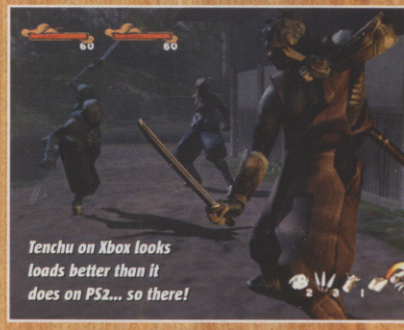
EXCITE METER

TENCHU
RETURN FROM DARKNESS

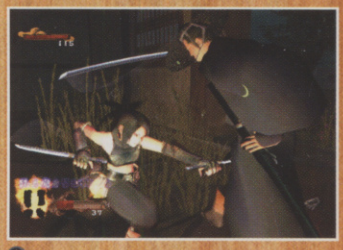
PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER K2 LTD
OUT: MARCH
AVAILABLE ON XBOX
x2
WWW.ACTIVISION.COM

Update of the excellent Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven for PS2. The news is that Xbox will get two new maps for single-player missions – a Samurai mansion, and 'deserted' pagoda temple, and six online co-op missions playable on Xbox Live. In addition to all that, the entire game engine has been subject to an overhaul, with improved enemy AI (though we didn't really have a problem with this in the first place), and a range of new stealth moves and combat options.

The appeal of this game lies with its dependence on three characters and their range of archaic but effective weaponry. If you're a big fan of Splinter Cell and Metal Gear, and want to try a different flavour, this über-Xbox package is something to look out for.



Tenchu on Xbox looks loads better than it does on PS2... so there!



Ayame demonstrates one of her below-the-belt new moves. Ouch

More stealth attacks for your Yen are gonna spice things up a bit

WE LOVE

- Rock solid improvements over the PS2 version
- Looks better, too

WE HATE

- Weapons feel inadequate
- Ancient Japan isn't the most compelling of backdrops

EXCITE METER

SWORD of MANA

The arc of your magic blasts changes depending on the weapon equipped

Shops close at night. Funny that

Rest at an Inn to regain strength

Some of the monsters are enormous

You cannot progress beyond Marsh Cave until you learn how to break these seals

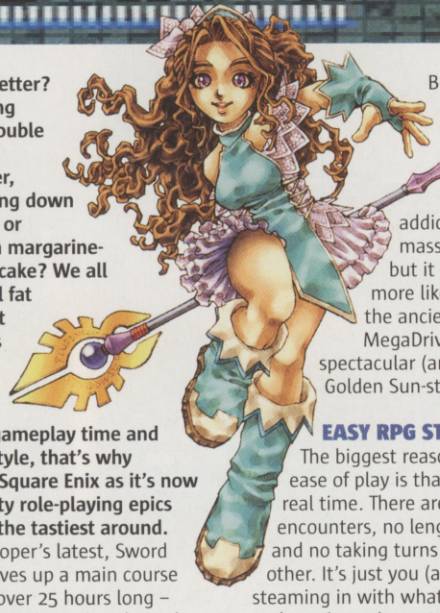
- PUBLISHER NINTENDO
- DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX
- OUT MARCH 18

IN A NUTSHELL

Classic RPG adventuring in this remake of an ancient Game Boy game (Final Fantasy Adventure) where you fight monsters in real-time, talk to mad locals and solve simple puzzles.

AVAILABLE ON GAME BOY ADVANCE

WWW.SQUARE-ENIX-USA.COM/GAMES/SOM



What's better? Chowing down on a double bacon rodeo cheese burger, sauce dribbling down your fingers, or nibbling on a margarine-covered rice cake? We all know the full fat muchos meat option tastes better. And with their extra helpings of gameplay time and lashings of style, that's why Square's (or Square Enix as it's now known) meaty role-playing epics are some of the tastiest around.

The developer's latest, Sword Of Mana, serves up a main course quest that's over 25 hours long – enough to keep you going through many a damp Spring afternoon.

But unusually for a Square RPG, it's also pretty simple to get to grips with. It's still addictive and massively involving, but it plays much more like a classic from the ancient SNES and MegaDrive days than a spectacular (and complicated) Golden Sun-style saga.

EASY RPG STREET

The biggest reason for Mana's ease of play is that battles are in real time. There are no random encounters, no lengthy strategising and no taking turns to wallop each other. It's just you (and some AI pals) steaming in with whatever weapons and magic you've got handy. As a result, fights can turn into messy scrums with very little strategy involved. But at least they are frantic.

But though the fights are simple, they're not completely brainless. Enemies are vulnerable to different types of physical attacks, like jabs and slashes, and you need to switch weapons or fighter to suit the monster

Fanny's gone the wrong way again! Path-finding AI is well dodgy

THE WEIRD GREENHOUSE

Like a freakish third nipple concealed in your girlfriend's cleavage, nestled in among Mana's adventuring is one of the weirdest things you'll see in ages.

The Hothouse is a travelling hideout that follows you around. Inside you can fix weapons, chat to artistic plant life and generally act a bit mental.

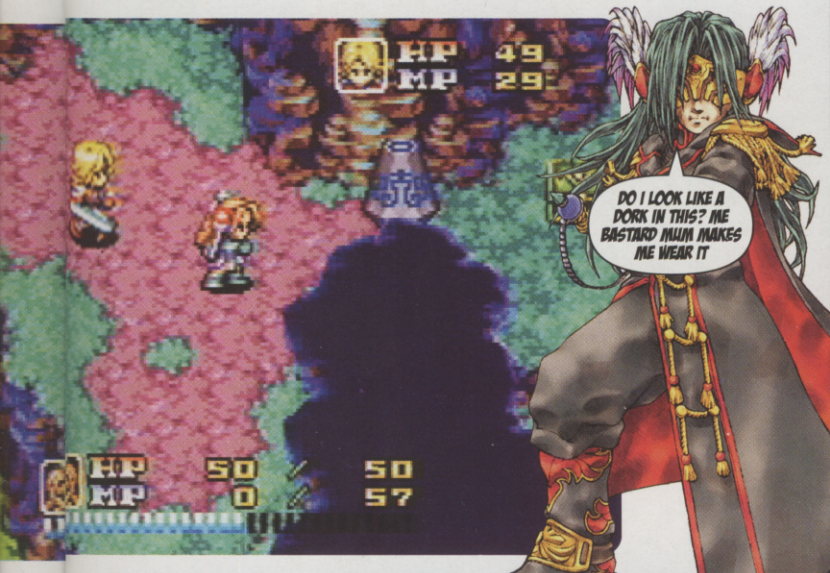
Find a plant pot and pour in the cactus juice to 'summon' the hothouse

Ker-ching! The weirdest secret base ever bounces up before your eyes

Combine seeds you find here to enhance your weapons' abilities

The dialogue is pretty sparky even if it is a bit 'ye olde worlde'

Reckon something spooky's going on inside Vinquette Hall? We do



you're scrapping. It's a bit fiddly, but battles shouldn't be a walk in the park, should they? Besides, your fellow adventurers can help out. Trouble is, their AI is terrible, and they often get stuck behind bushes and rocks. Idiots. And while Sword of Mana is nothing to do with the SNES classic Secret Of Mana, fans of that aged multiplayer classic will be gutted to find that Sword Of Mana offers no co-op multiplayer whatsoever. Boo!

MY FIRST ROLE-PLAYER

The story is the usual guff about religious heretics and dark lords drunk with demonic power. Or possibly cider. Either way, you must choose a nameless hero or heroine to fight against the darkness, with you playing slightly different scenes depending on your choice. Regardless of who you pick, you have the chance to tailor your hero's abilities when you level up by assigning points to all the usual attributes like strength, magic, defence and so on.

In spite of the game's simplicity and relative lack of sophistication compared with recent GBA adventures, we can't stop playing it. The pace is lightning, the dialogue is ace and you you rarely find yourself frustrated and stuck. All good, and should give the game wider appeal beyond the usual swords 'n' sorcery RPG-heads.

CROSS SWORDS, ANGRY ARROWS

For once, this is a role-player everyone can enjoy, as there's no turn-based combat and no random encounters with unseen foes.

When battle begins, your heroes automatically draw their selected weapons, leaving you to dive straight in with the hacking and the slashing. Land enough blows and your Deathblow gauge (at the bottom of the screen) fills and you can unleash a mega attack.

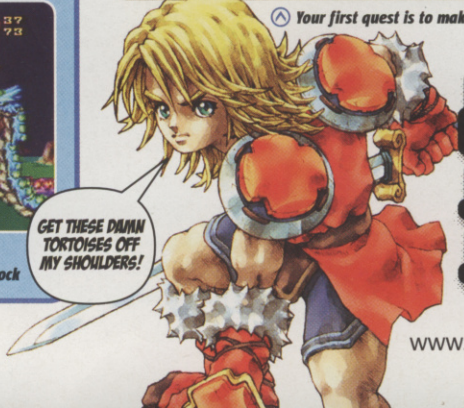
Switch control of your heroes to use their individual strengths in battle

Focus on levelling up your magic skills and you can unleash fiery fury on your foes

Sometimes it's best not to engage, so you sneak past snoozing monsters instead

There's little strategy to the boss fights, but the status change effects rock

Your first quest is to make your way to the town of Wendel



CVG OPINION

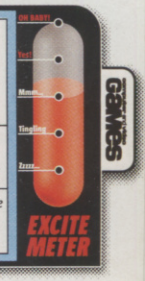
Though it's old-skool, it's certainly fun. It could be the perfect role-player for beginners or those who hate turn-based scraps. **Lee**

WE LOVE

- Stupidly addictive slashing
- It ticks over at a fair old pace
- Pretty visuals and cool monsters

WE HATE

- It's yet another easy GBA remake
- Not a huge amount of depth
- Music is unusually cack



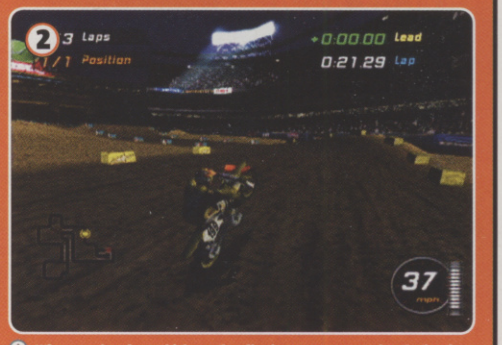
Your opponents won't cut you any slack when you hit Events mode

Shunting someone's rear is even juicier in first-person mode

MORE MOTO MAYHEM

If the in-game tracks aren't enough to appease your Moto addiction, hit the Dirt Wurx mode. It's an easy-to-use editor that lets you fiddle about with all the twists and jumps you can handle. And best of all, it's nice and easy to use.

Slap down the track pieces and bank up those corners



When you're done, kick up the dirt in your custom death-circuit

- PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
- DEVELOPER LEFT FIELD
- OUT: MARCH 19

ONLINE GAMING x4

IN A NUTSHELL

Combining gritty Motocross racing with arse-cacking stunt action, MTX packs in modes, options and online play tighter than a ratchet up the exhaust. Could this be the first Motocross game to really get our crankshafts oily?

AVAILABLE ON PS2

ALSO ON XBOX

WWW.MTXMOTOTRAX.COM

MTX MOTOTRAX™ FEATURING TRAVIS PASTRANA

The rush of wind against your face, the crunch of metal against metal, the sinewy snap of brittle bones against inopportune bollards – this ain't no Sunday cycle in the country. Welcome to MTX Mototrax.

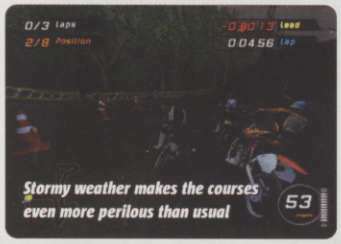
In the past, Motocross games have been the fat ugly girl that stinks of kippers at the school disco of Extreme Sports games. Activision hopes to pack her off to slimming camp and squeeze her into a leather catsuit with the release of MTX Mototrax. Developed by the same team that brought us the acclaimed ExciteBike 64 on the defunct Nintendo system, MTX sports a double-D sized bounty of licensed bikes, riders and tracks.

TRACTION ACTION

Kicking off in the Motocross compound, the comprehensive tutorial area lets you brush up those tire-scorching skills, covering everything from nad-mashing stunts to blistering racing technique, before hitting the dirt track for real. Once you're out in Events mode, the bikes handle realistically and the silky smooth visuals keep every skid, slide and jump feeling tight and focused. You'll need all the control you can muster too – your opponents will leave you mangled around a pile of wreckage as soon as let you near the finish line.

Overcome the learning curve, though, and you will unlock further tracks and stockpile piles of cash to blow on juicy bike upgrades and accessories. As well as fully customisable riders and courses, the finished game also promises head-to-head online racing. The way things are shaping up, MTX might just be the title to get Motocross games out of the realm of enthusiasts, and have even casual gamers fumbling for their helmets. CVG

Sadly, levitating to the finish line isn't an option, so stay on your bike



Stormy weather makes the courses even more perilous than usual

Abuse your bike suspension to gain impressive altitude on jumps

Smashing your tyres into an opponent's brain can be a winning strategy too

CVG OPINION

Motocross games are usually about as exciting as riding a tricycle, but the white-knuckle pace and frantic action of MTX could change all that. **Matt W**

WE LOVE
- Many tracks, modes and options
- Loads of bike stunts
- Customisable riders and courses

WE HATE
- The bike handling is tricky
- Bikes sound like hoovers
- Motocross isn't everyone's bag

EXCITE METER

Unreal II
THE AWAKENING

PUBLISHER
ATARI
DEVELOPER
TANTALUS/EPIC
OUT: MARCH 12

x8

IN A NUTSHELL

The hit PC shooter is ported to the Xbox. As you'd expect, it looks as stunning as a supermodel on a nudist beach and boasts more firepower than Bush's army.

AVAILABLE ON

XBOX

WWW.UNREAL2.COM

A year ago if you wanted to play Unreal II: The Awakening you'd have to invest in a hulking great PC. Fast forward to the present and you can play the game on an Xbox, a console that's only an inch smaller than your average PC. Now that's what we call progress!

We shouldn't mock Microsoft's black beast though, not when it's running something as impressive as Unreal II. If you're looking for a thrilling first-person shooter while you twiddle your thumbs waiting for Halo 2 to arrive, then this could be it.

SHOOT, FIRE, KILL

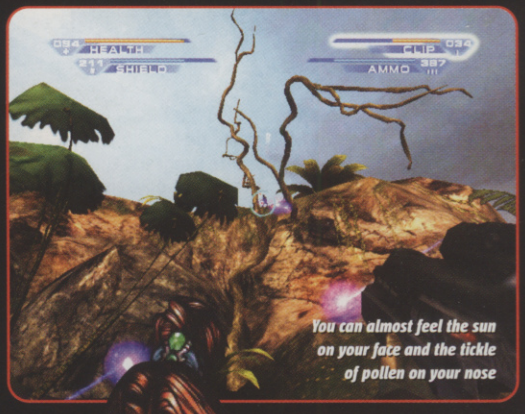
Unreal II does everything you'd expect from a first-person shooter, but where it looks to excel is in creating atmospheric edge-of-your-seat action. The levels are large, ranging from exotic outdoor locations to dark and dingy industrial buildings full of dimly lit corners and lurking enemies.

Try as you might you can't blast your pals. Boo!

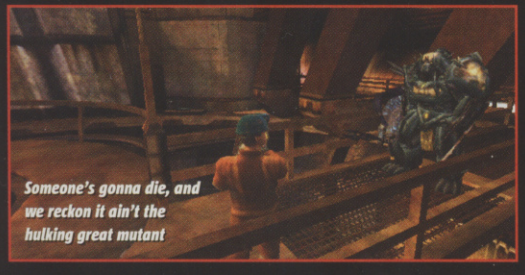
The alien breeds you fight include the classic Skaarj, and newcomers Drakk and Izarians will have Scrabble players excited. Aliens also provide pleasure for gung-ho veterans thanks to their intelligent AI that puts Jurassic Park's raptors to shame. With the introduction of co-operative play, this looks set to turn out even better than the PC original.

Factor in the online multiplayer action, including new team play clashes and raging deathmatch bouts, and you can see why we're rather excited. It's set to become one of Xbox Live's most popular titles too. And considering that the next Xbox Live update enables you form clans from your friends list, this could be Unreal's finest hour. CVG

A neighbour popping by to borrow a cup of sugar maybe?



You can almost feel the sun on your face and the tickle of pollen on your nose



Someone's gonna die, and we reckon it ain't the hulking great mutant

Perhaps the tour guide is wrong and the locals aren't all that friendly

LIGHT 'EM UP

Every good shooter must have a devastating array of weaponry and Unreal II doesn't aim to disappoint.

The obligatory Rocket Launcher and Assault Rifle along with their alien variants will provide plenty of thrills to readers of Guns And Ammo, but the real treat is the Flamethrower. Thanks to the advanced particle systems in the game, the flames and energy pulses from your weapons are class. Burning aliens has never been so much fun.

Unleash your death ray to turn the enemies to toast

The mixture of industrial and organic environments is sweet

Particle effects are awesome on all the weapons

He's got two pistols but you've got a whacking great rocket launcher. Hahah!

She so hot, she love you long time... if she doesn't blow your head off first

Watch out, alien lifeform about

Unleash your anger on the unsuspecting flora of the alien landscape

CVG OPINION

An absorbing sci-fi shooter that doesn't stray too far from the formula but adds spectacular spit and polish. Should be a stop-gap till Halo 2. **Alex H**

WE LOVE

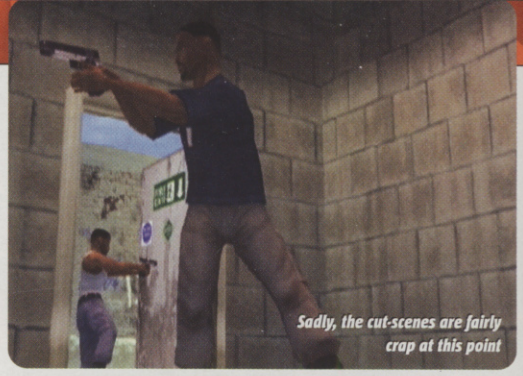
- Sumptuous level design
- Intelligent enemy AI
- Great range of weapons

WE HATE

- The set pieces feel too staged
- Hardly all that original
- Halo 2 is on the way after all

EXCITE METER

BAD BOYS II


Sadly, the cut-scenes are fairly crap at this point

Hey man, don't sweat it. Just chill-out, ok?

PUBLISHER
EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER
EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
OUT FEBRUARY 27

x1

IN A NUTSHELL

Officially licensed game of the movie following NARC cops Mike and Marcus as they negotiate 15 stages of Time Crisis-inspired gunplay, using handguns and harsh language in the war against drugs.

AVAILABLE ON
XBOX

ALSO ON
PS2, GC, PC

WWW.EMPIREINTERACTIVE.CO.UK

Swearing is a natural stress reliever. Don't believe us? Let's say you close your hands in a car door (it happens to CVG's ham-handed Graeme a lot). A simple "Oh, bother" just won't do. Only a 100-decibel "Faaaaaaaak!" will ease the pain. Swearing is also cool. This must be true because of the hail of insulting metaphors exchanged between baddest of bad-ass NARC cops Mike and Marcus in the official Bad Boys II movie licence tie-in.

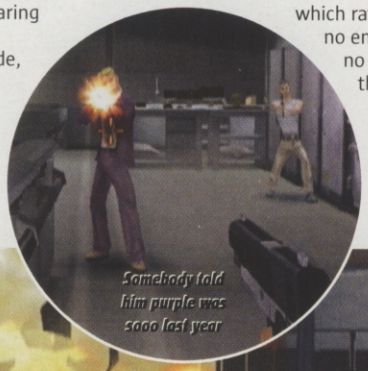
As the title suggests, they really are rather naughty boys. In fact, the bickering buddies bring a whole new meaning to the term 'boys in blue' – if swearing was an Olympic sport, Lowry and Burnett would be red hot favourites for the gold medal. Which is why we ain't bitching about the way the game stays faithful to the movie swearing throughout.

Cussing aside, what quickly grabs you by the goolies like an angry Aussie hooker (of the rugby kind) is the way BBII pays homage to gloriously fun blastathon lightgun series Time Crisis, albeit in third-person. But BBII also adds a few new ideas of its own too.

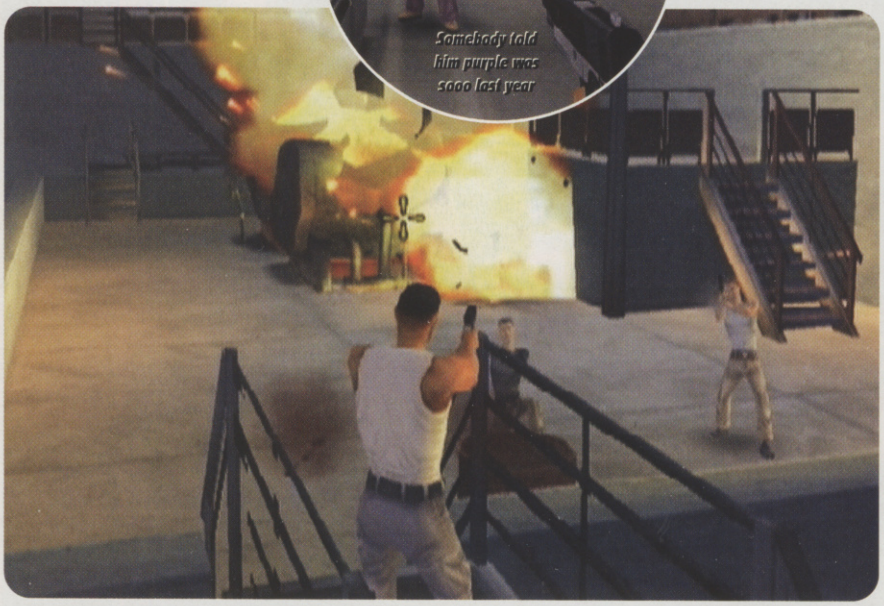
The whole premise of this single-player game is designed around a cleverly crafted system called Cover Points (see box below right). These strategically positioned glowing discs allow Mike or Marcus to hide behind cover in relative safety, move the crosshair over any part of an enemy's anatomy (yes, even his bollocks), and lean out to give him the good news.

IT'S A COVER UP

Cleverly, some of the cover points are there to deliberately throw you. Just when you're expecting to be pinned down, nothing happens until you move over to another cover point, which ratchets up the tension no end. Better still, there's no time limit to get through each area, and although enemies follow a strict pattern of movement, you can always find another cover point to roll over to.


Somebody told him purple was sooo last year

Use fuel canisters to take out any grunts stupid enough to go near 'em



COVER YOUR ASS

The ace up the sleeveless t-shirt of Bad Boys II lies in its cunning cover point system.

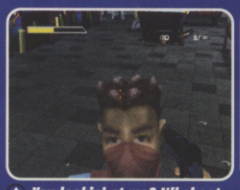
Barrel into a room without using the scenery to crouch behind and you'll end up a blood-soaked sieve sharpish. Use cover, and goons'll soon be dropping faster than turds down a curry house bog.

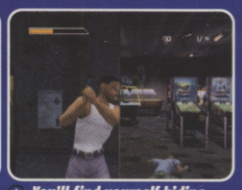
Find a cover point. Any damned cover point!

From cover, use the crosshair to line up the visible targets

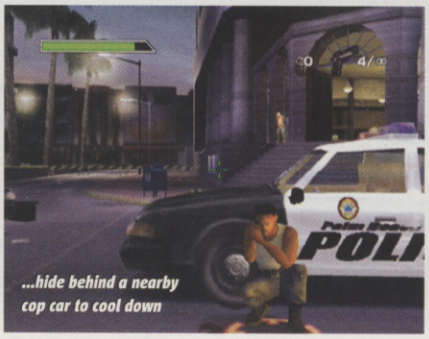
Lean out button and turn the sucker's kneecaps into chum

Return to cover after emptying your clip


You lookin' at me? I'll shoot you in the face!

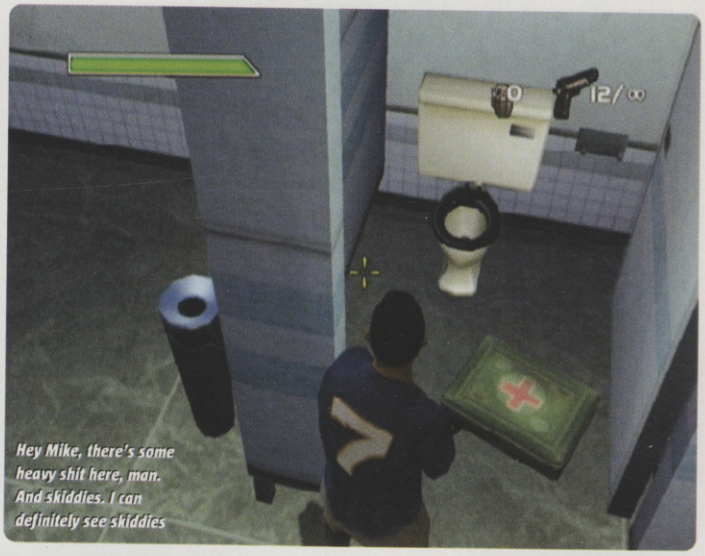

You'll find yourself hiding a lot in this game

If things get a bit too hot for you outside the bank...

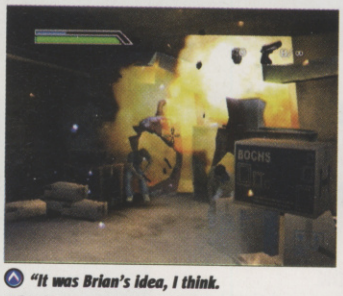

...hide behind a nearby cop car to cool down

Aw, now you've gone and sprayed brain over my new T-shirt...

All the locations are taken directly from the film itself


Hey Mike, there's some heavy shit here, man. And skiddies. I can definitely see skiddies

"Whose idea was it to hide behind these highly flammable, fuel canisters?"


"It was Brian's idea, I think. Why do you ask? AAAARRGH!"

Oh dear. Someone told him to chill out and he took it a wee bit literally

If I wanted extra fries, I'd have asked for them, fool!

BBII may follow a similar game mechanic to Time Crisis and Kill.Switch, but it also adds a whole new layer of playability to the gaming onion by allowing you to shoot weapons out of the baddies' hands.

Manage to do this, and the snivelling grunt gives up, putting his hands behind his head in the hope that you won't splatter his brains over his new designer suit. Yeah, right. Bearing in mind you get a bonus rating for executions, we don't rate his chances...

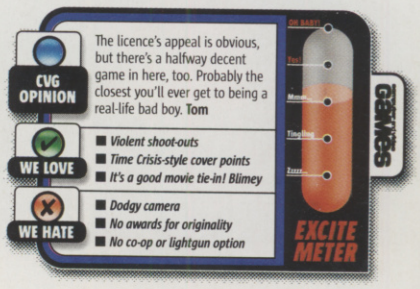
WOT, NO GRUMBLES?

As you'll have gathered, perhaps what's most surprising is that BBII plays pretty well considering most film tie-ins are hideous, cash-harvesting washouts. Sure, the cut-scenes here might suck harder than a Jordan home video, but the core element of the all-out arcade gunplay is surprisingly addictive.

What we are a bit miffed at is that Will Smith and Martin Lawrence haven't been signed-up to do the voiceovers. This is the officially licensed product, right? Fair enough, the replacements aren't that bad, but we still feel a bit short changed. More worryingly, though, the camera needs a makeover that even a frill-cuffed dandy like Llewelyn-Bowen would struggle to mend, and there are some fairly awful invisible barriers designed, of course, to keep you firmly on the linear path.

Obviously, the further you progress, the tougher the challenge becomes. For instance, Russians like surprising you by diving through plate glass windows, which is cool and all, but we reckon it could get a bit samey, in spite of the increasing difficulty.

It's probably not destined for classic status but this ultra violent, surprisingly addictive shooter should appeal to the sort of gamers who, once started, won't rest till all the pug uglies are blasted full of holes.



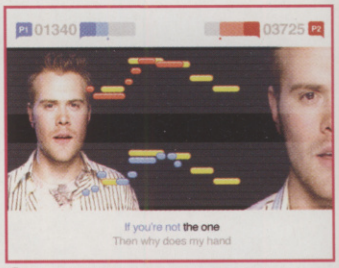
PRACTICE MAKES PUREE

Shooting your gun like a girl? Taking a beating on the streets?

Get some practice on the shooting range. The further you progress through the game, the more practice options you unlock.

Mike showed the deadly blue cardboard cut-out terrorists no mercy...

Blondie's Heart Of Glass is easy if you like to sing breathy



Dan has girly high notes to annoy the dog

The presentation makes this much more of a lifestyle gadget than proper game

singstar

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY
OUT MAY

ONLINE GAMING x6

IN A NUTSHELL

Party game fun in the latest peripheral game from the studio that gave the world EyeToy. Pick your music from a selection of classic hits and recent smashes and warble to win.

AVAILABLE ON PS2

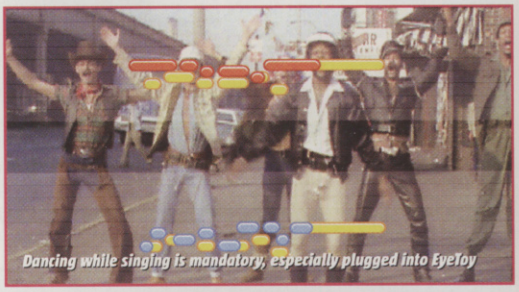
WWW.UK.PLAYSTATION.COM

He's a baldy, Joe Average-looking kinda guy. In any fair reality Justin Timberlake would be more suited to a career in Forbidden Planet than King of Pop. Somehow, though, wailing like a muppet and blowing raspberries into a microphone has made him a Diaz-doing international sex symbol. It must be the singing. Now Sony's come up with a cool way to test whether you'll ever reach the Britney-boffing one's lofty heights.

GET YO' GROOVE ON

Like Sony's EyeToy, you need the right tools to enjoy SingStar. In this case it's two microphones to enjoy sing-offs and warble-battles with pals. It's like karaoke with a twist – instead of merely making a twat of yourself in front of drunken strangers, you're scored on your ability to hold a tune too. As the vocals play, words appear for you to follow and a line tracks across the screen representing the pitch of the tune. As you sing, your own line appears on screen and the more in tune you sing, the closer your line should match the game's.

Try not to let the sexy ladies put you off your singing


Dancing while singing is mandatory, especially plugged into EyeToy

Learn words to songs you've heard zillions but never actually knew

It's clever technology, but what's really music to everyone's ears is the track lists for the three different versions. The Pop disc has recent cheese from Westlife and Bedingfield, and sass from Sugababes and Mis-Teeq. The Classics disc features arm-waving favourite YMCA as well as hits from the past 30 years. The Urban disc, released just after the first two, features Eminem and loads more.

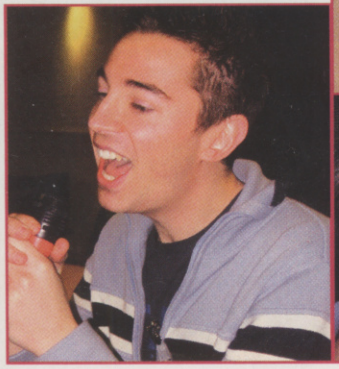
What's more you can combine SingStar with EyeToy and record stills of your crooning for maximum comedy. Tanked up Saturday night multiplayer will never be the same again.

I'M SINGING, NOT MINGING

We had an exclusive hands-on at Sony HQ in London and, infused with the power of pre-noon shandy, our inhibitions crumbled as we filled Sony's board room with tear-jerking musicality.

The way the game registers the pitch of your voice is way clever, and the two-player sing-offs are pure cheesy fun. We could have sung all day, had the developers of Getaway 2 not kicked us out for putting them off their programming. Idiots.

Lee couldn't sing as well as the Cheeky Girls, but at least his teeth are less scary



CVG OPINION

It might be a leap from traditional multiplayer like Pro Evo and Mario Kart, and is a bit girly, but it's still sure to enrich your gaming life. **Lee**

WE LOVE
- Brilliant songs to sing
- It comes with two mics
- Wick party action

WE HATE
- Some songs too hard!
- There's no shooting things
- No 'Shoop Shoop Song'

REGISTERED CHARITY 216401
When you can't talk about abuse, talk to us.
Many young people who are being abused never talk about it. What do you say? Who to? And what exactly is abuse? There are several places you can turn. For free, confidential help and advice 24 hours a day call ChildLine on 0800 1111, or call the NSPCC's Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000. You can find further contacts, expert advice and support on a dedicated website. Just visit www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk
Talking helps it stop. FULL STOP.
NSPCC

EXCLUSIVE SCREENS!

■ PUBLISHER
SEGA
■ DEVELOPER
AMUZE
■ OUT: APRIL

ONLINE GAMING

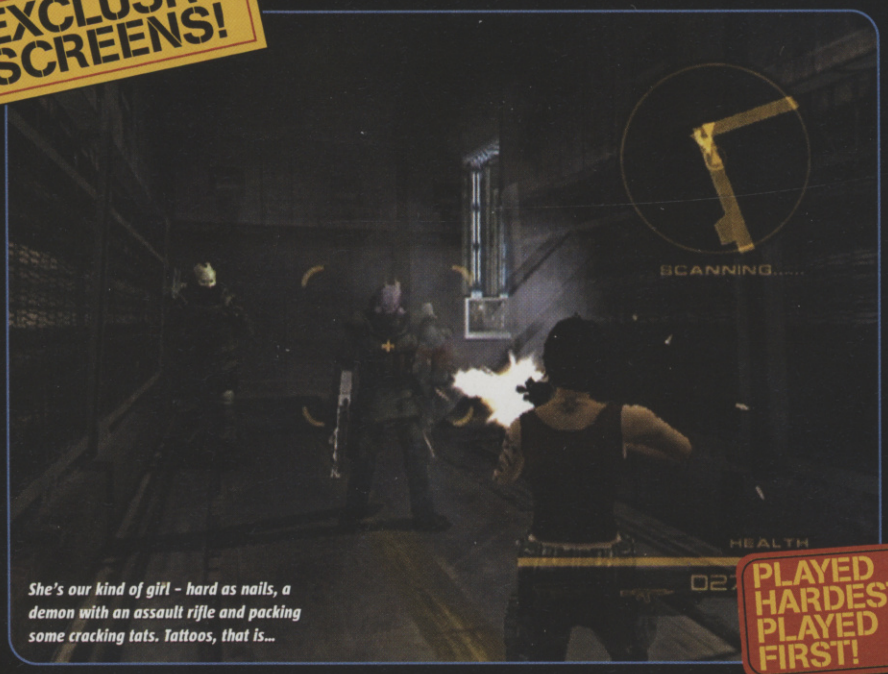
IN A NUTSHELL

Over fifteen levels of criminal-blasting mercenary mayhem, with a smashing storyline powering the action. Shitloads of shooters, bombs, futuristic gadgets, and it's even got a hot chick with big blasters. Bosh!

AVAILABLE ON
PS2

ALSO ON
XBOX

WWW.SEGA-EUROPE.COM



She's our kind of girl - hard as nails, a demon with an assault rifle and packing some cracking tats. Tattoos, that is...

PLAYED HARDEST, PLAYED FIRST!

Enhanced vision modes let you track enemies behind walls. And just generally look well cool

There's a sweet variety of bad guys, from escaped convicts wearing crazy masks, to kick-ass military hardnuts

HEADHUNTER
REDEMPTION

In the future there'll be high-tech girlfriends who don't go mental when you play Pro Evo all night. Toast won't go soggy when you slap some beans on top. And headhunters kitted out with enough hardware to keep Bin Laden in business for an eternity will earn their crust putting holes in criminals.

Jack Wade's already a veteran of this profession. He was the star of the first Headhunter on Dreamcast and PS2, a third-person shooter that borrowed the best bits from Metal Gear and Syphon Filter. Now Jack – older, wiser, and grizzled like a pensioner's nutsack – is back.

Redemption takes place twenty years on from the original. Cities have evolved so that the wealthy live atop sparkly skyscrapers, and the polluted, dangerous underworld is filled with criminals, videogame journalists and other scummers.

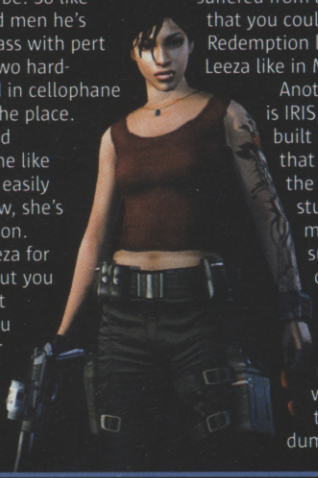
Leeza's a flexible young lady and can cartwheel out of danger. Bet she's rubbish at footie, though

X-RATED LEEZA

Jack's now in charge of his own Headhunting agency, but he's not as young as he used to be. So like all good middle-aged men he's hired a sexy young lass with pert tits and an ass like two hard-boiled eggs wrapped in cellophane to help out around the place.

She's Leeza X, and although with a name like that she could quite easily join the So Solid Crew, she's the star of Redemption.

You'll control Leeza for most of the game, but you do get to play Jack at crucial moments. You can be as stealthy or as gung-ho as you like, creeping round or cartwheeling through crossfires.



Enemies flail convincingly and spurt blood when you empty a clip into them, and if the AI gets tightened up, Redemption could feature some cracking shoot-outs.

The gameplay hasn't changed much, but there are some impressive refinements. The first Headhunter suffered from a lazy-arsed camera that you couldn't even control – Redemption lets you swoop around Leeza like in Metal Gear and GTA.

Another cool new addition is IRIS, a targeting computer built into your sunglasses that identifies features of the environment. If you're stuck, switch to IRIS mode, scan your surroundings, and work out your next move.

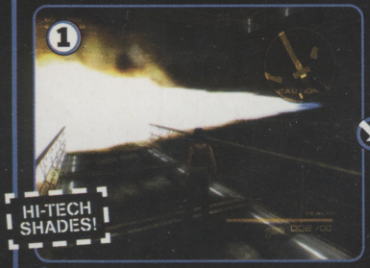
BIKER BAR

More surprisingly, the motorbike sections that were so distinctive in the original have been dumped. We're pretty

YOU SCAN DO IT

In Headhunter you get an IRIS scanner, which probably stands for something clever like Internal Retina Information Scanner.

Like the scanner in Metroid Prime, it acts like a heads-up display and offers information on your surroundings that more often than not contains tips on how to proceed. It's cool because you never get too stuck with a puzzle, but it might make things a bit obvious.



Design mistake - flames roasting bridge, and shut-off vent out of reach

But wait - scan that suspicious looking barrel back in the corridor! Explosive, woo-hoo!

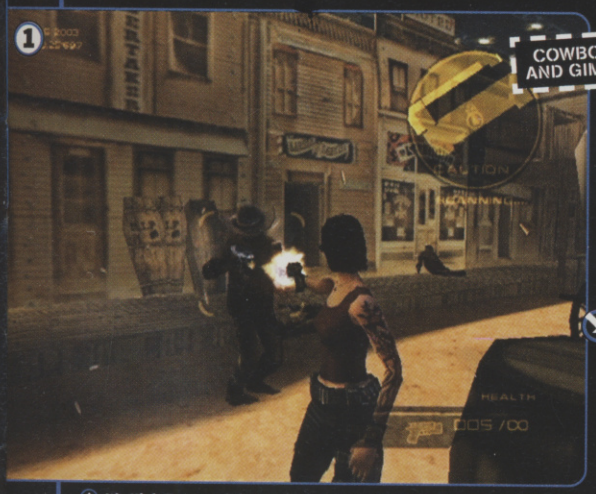
Blast the barrel, it blows up, the wall collapses. Now you can get to the valve!

Wiggle the left analogue stick and shut that shit off! God bless you IRIS!

LIGHTS, CAMERA, CARNAGE!

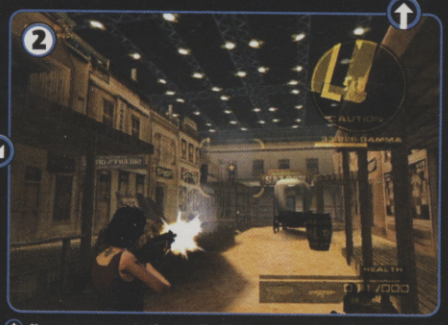
If there's one thing we love, it's futuristic game shows where the star prize is survival. Imagine I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here! with Ainsley Harriott getting his smarmy face rearranged with the butt of an assault rifle! Make it happen, TV execs.

Anyway, Psycho Star is Redemption's killer game show and takes Leeza on an audience-pleasing journey through some pretty weird locations...



It's High Noon and time to kick some serious ass, Western style! It's a cool change of scenery

And you'll also come across a dodgy porno set complete with leather-clad gimps! Dirty!



You can even see the studio lights above the rickety set. There's a haunted house too

pleased, since they didn't serve much purpose and have been far surpassed by Vice City's two-wheeled fun.

Losing the bikes also ensures Redemption never lets up with the action. You start the game learning the ropes from Jack, but end up discovering a world-threatening conspiracy. The storyline's still a closely guarded secret, but we've played levels chock-full of escaped prisoners, encountered gruesome biological experiments, and met a sultry Eastern European freedom fighter called Che.

But our favourite moment came when Leeza suddenly stumbled straight into a scene from a Western movie, with goons dressed in chaps and ten-gallon hats staging their own personal High Noon. Turns out we'd wandered into Psycho Star, a Running Man style TV show.

So even though the gameplay doesn't do anything especially new, the imaginative storyline, cool set-pieces and non-stop shooting and puzzling could set Redemption apart. We're already hunting down the finished version.

PENSION HUNTER

Just because Jack's a bit of an old bugger now doesn't mean he can't still beat the crap out of sumvabitch crims.

While Leeza's the main character, you get the chance to stretch Jack's zimmer-frame supported legs in a few missions.

When Leeza gets into deep trouble, Jack's there to bail her out. She's just a girl, right?

Salt and pepper hair, sinewy biceps, scruffy beard... the years haven't been too unkind

Check out the body count! Proof old people aren't just a burden to society!

These shots are so hot we don't even know what this thing is. Looks boggin', though

Is sinister genetic research mixed up in Redemption's plot? Shoot first, questions later

CVG OPINION

Okay, so it's another third-person shooter, but Redemption has enough new ideas and classy features to turn a few heads. **Graeme**

WE LOVE
- Imaginative and varied storyline
- Cracking guns and gadgets
- The IRIS system works brilliantly

WE HATE
- Artificial intelligence needs work
- Under the surface it's unoriginal
- The puzzles feel a bit stilted

EXCITE METER

DEAD MAN'S HAND

- PUBLISHER: ATARI
- DEVELOPER: HUMAN HEAD
- OUT: MARCH
- AVAILABLE ON: XBOX
- ONLINE GAMING: x16
- WWW.DEAD-MANS-HAND.COM

Sci-fi shooters are so common that even Jade Goodie won't be seen playing one. We all want to see new settings and stories for our FPS gore-fests. Out of all the possible cool scenarios for a new shooter though, the Wild West wouldn't be at the top of our list. We'd prefer bizarre alternate realities where two-headed devil babies chew at your face against a backdrop of gizzard-sprayed impossible landscapes, but hey.

Still, Atari seems to think Wild West is where it's at. Thankfully, Dead Man's Hand is trying to be more than just another FPS by introducing the Powershot gauge. If you blast rival rootin' tootin' twatheads in quick succession, or shoot their hats off, you get extra power on the gauge. You are even rewarded for leathering the scenery, as long as you do it quickly and with style. Fill the bar and you can unleash a devastating secondary attack, like a spray of bullets, or a super sniper scope. Atari will be hoping this gimmick, plus the Clint-tastic setting, will make Dead Man's Hand the toughest, coolest shooter in the saloon.

Fellow Wild West jailbird Iago won't die even if you shoot him in the face

Health is represented by a deck of cards. Aces are low

WE LOVE
- Shooting cowboys' hats off
- Crushing enemies
- Might be fun online

WE HATE
- The comedy style is weak
- Doesn't look so great
- Way too easy at the mo'

EXCITE METER

感染拡大 .hack INFECTION

Chaos Gates are used to warp from one area to the next using Keywords

DUNGEON MASTERS

Whether in the field or deep inside the never-ending dungeons, be prepared to battle your brains out in .hack. The real-time battles are extremely fast, so you'll have to think very quickly.

Attacks depend on your level, weapon and equipment

'Skills' is magic to attack opponents or heal your party

Data Drain is a hacking tool that rewrites a monster's code

Use Chat commands to direct other members in your party

■ PUBLISHER
ATARI
■ DEVELOPER
BANDAI
■ OUT: MARCH 12

ONLINE GAMING x1

IN A NUTSHELL

Simulated online role-playing game. Join a pretend world, chat to pretend people and battle monsters in an attempt to solve a very real pretend mystery.

AVAILABLE ON PS2

WWW.DOTHACK.COM

Brilliant concept. Create an offline RPG that mimics every aspect of an online role-playing game, including the silly self-conscious chat and ham-fisted flirting. Immerse the gamer so deeply that they don't know what's real and what isn't, then start screwing with their minds with a storyline that has fictional participants in the fictional gaming universe mysteriously disappearing and falling into comas in the 'real world'. Phew.

And as if that wasn't enough of a head-shag, why not play with your audience's minds a little more by simultaneously releasing anime DVDs not to mention an anime TV series that expands on the universe. It's certainly a marketing man's dream come true, but is it a gamer's dream come true?

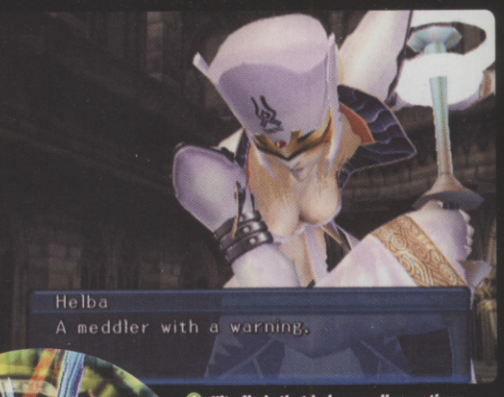
BIG BROTHER

Well, we've played it loads, and watched the beautiful anime film and it certainly fragged with our heads, and that's hard to do, 'cos our heads are famed for being frag-resistant, usually. So realistic is .hack's portrayal of a real MMORPG, it's ironic that the one major flaw is the all-too-accurate depiction of the occasionally tedious dungeon exploration which forms a large chunk of the gameplay in genuine MMORPGs.

If you're expecting RPG gameplay driven by a strong story, as in Final Fantasy, you'll be disappointed. Once you realise the actual story revolves around finding out what happens to the other 'real world' gamers who are playing against you, it all makes a little more sense.

SPIRITED AWAY

The real story is set in 2007. An online RPG called The World has sold 20 million copies and taken the gaming community by storm. You play another punter who has signed up to participate in The World. After

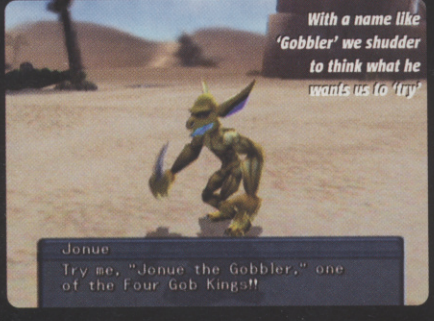


Kite finds that being small sometimes has its advantages

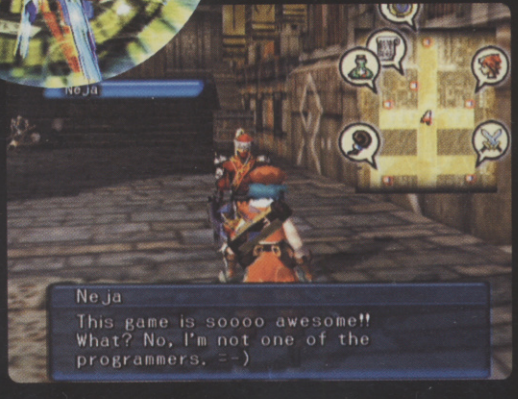
Perform illegal Gate Hacks to enter areas The World wants to keep secret

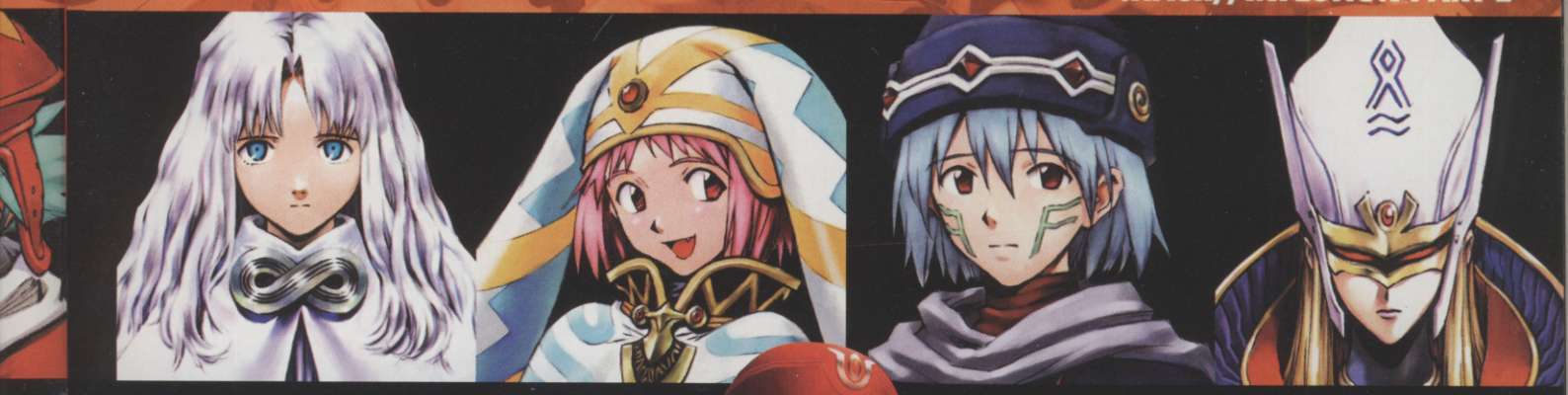
The two hub towns are areas where you can trade potions and equipment

Hold down L2 to enter first-person viewpoint and inspect the pleasing sights



With a name like 'Gobbler' we shudder to think what he wants us to 'try'





Some of the scenery in the 'Prohibited' areas is truly surreal. Giant mutant snowmen, for instance

Grunties are pig-like pets. Collect exotic foods to rear them

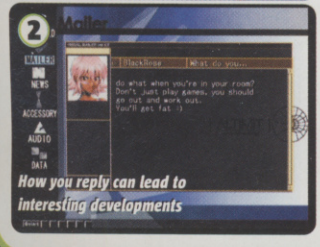
At the end of each dungeon you'll find a Zeit statue and lots of treasure

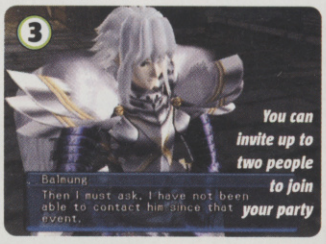
Each monster has an elemental weakness to discover and exploit

FAKE FRIENDS

Despite being played entirely offline and against computer opponents, The World is an uncannily accurate representation of the online gaming experience.

It's hard to remember that you're not dealing with real people when you get emails, Flash Messages and Message Board replies from different characters.





you log on, your friend Yasuhiko's character, Orca, shows your character, Kite, the role-playing ropes. When Orca and Kite are exploring on the beginners' server, something strange happens and Orca vanishes from The World. Assuming it's just a technical hitch, you send him a personal Flash Mail, but there's no reply. When you log off from The World, you discover that in real life, Yasuhiko has fallen into a coma. And he's not the first or the last. The plot thickens when posts you place on The World's message board asking about Yasuhiko/Orca are deleted. Using Kite as your eyes and ears in The World, you jack back in to solve the mystery.

It's the drive to solve this mystery that keeps you playing rather than a need to discover what's at the end of each massive dungeon. But you must level up by participating in as many real-time battles as possible to have any hope of defeating the formidable dungeon boss monsters.

With parts two, three and four to follow, the .hack phenomenon is sure gonna be hard to avoid over the next few months. It's to be hoped that the remaining instalments will introduce a little more variety into the gameplay, but the overall concept remains spellbinding, and we can't wait to see more. CVG

CVG OPINION

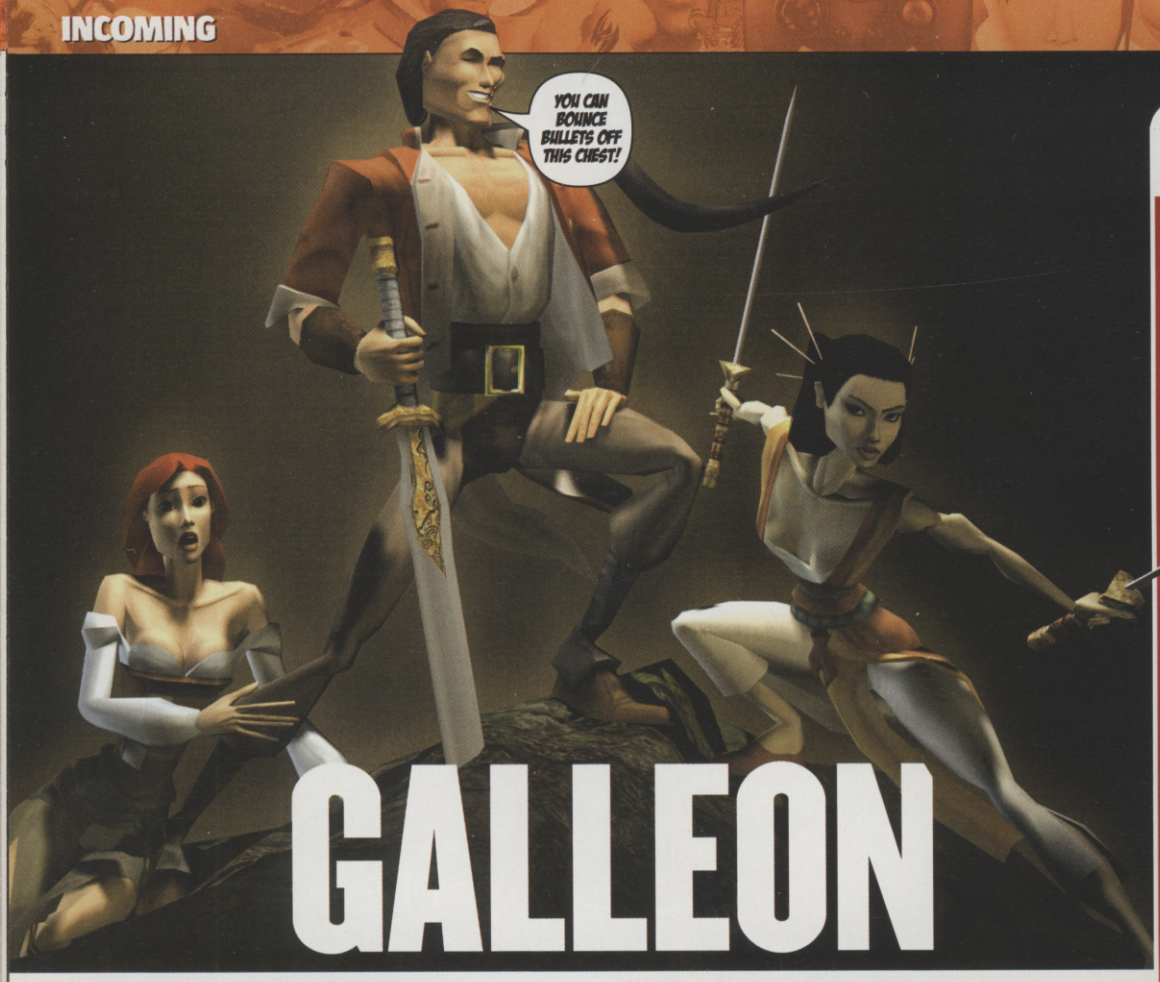
An ambitious project, but we love it when games try to unsettle us, and from what we've seen, the .hack universe will shake you up. **Maura**

WE LOVE

- *The scarily accurate portrayal of the online gaming community*
- *Bold and different*

WE HATE

- *Doesn't go quite far enough. It would be cool if The World harassed gamers for real!*



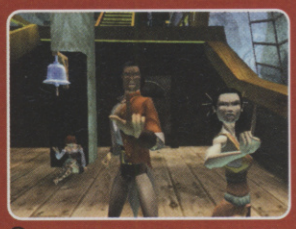
GALLEON

RHAMA'S ROCKIN' ROAD CREW

Rhama's so cool, and helpful with it, that he can't help attracting friends. So throughout the course of the adventure he enlists other characters to help with the fighting or solving puzzles.

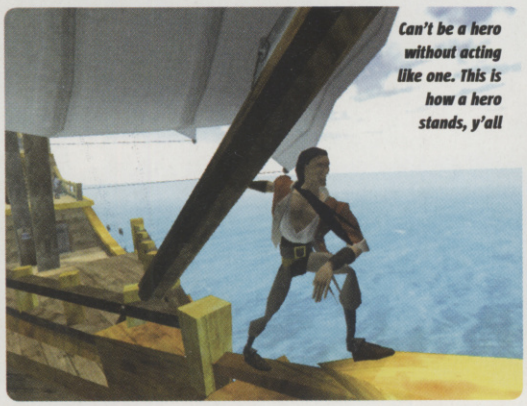
An early example is a fight where the accomplice is deadly Asian babe Mihoko. It says Kung Fu Master on her CV, and she doesn't waste time living up to it. Later you'll need to direct characters to flip switches and so on.

What I need you to do today, okay, is stand there and look horny. Okay?



Ring the bell for Round One. My kick-ass partner is gonna teach you a lesson

No way is this guy being allowed to join. Not with that beard, dude!

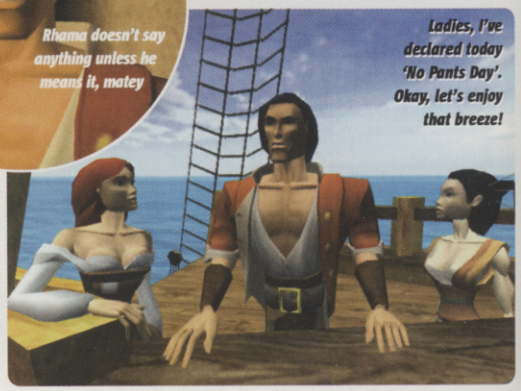


Can't be a hero without acting like one. This is how a hero stands, y'all

So this is dinner time, and I'm it. Never gonna happen, dude, gotta tell ya

Fists and blades I can handle, but magic, dude, is cheating and you know it. Gargh!

Rhama doesn't say anything unless he means it, matey



Ladies, I've declared today 'No Pants Day'. Okay, let's enjoy that breeze!

- PUBLISHER: SCI ENTERTAINMENT
- DEVELOPER: CONFOUNDING FACTOR
- OUT: MAY

x1

IN A NUTSHELL

More than just a chance for us to make seamen gags, Galleon sees you taking to the seas and dragging yourself up on deck (or just go casual if you prefer. Arf). Oh, and it's developed by Toby Gard, who invented Lara

AVAILABLE ON XBOX

ALSO ON TBC

WWW.CONFOUNDING-FACTOR.COM

Everyone knows that Beyoncé is all about it, and Justin Timberlake has a chunk of it too. No matter how hungry Mariah Carey gets she'll never taste a slice of it, and Liberty X can't muster an ounce of it between all five of them. 'It' is the thing that transforms you beyond plain sexy or cool into a godlike persona. Weirdly enough, Lara Croft – a videogame character no less, had it. Over time, Lara's 'It' got lost. The unique thing with Lara is that she could never have been born with it. Her 'It' had to come from somewhere else.

That somewhere else is Toby Gard, best known as the guy who dreamed up Lara Croft then cut all ties with development house Core. Call him mad, a lot of people did, but hey, at least he didn't sit around twiddling his thumbs. Quite the opposite, our Toby was hard at work giving 'It' to his latest creation, Captain Rhama, and creating this spectacular swashbuckling adventure.

OUR NEW BAD-ASS HERO SETS SAIL

Despite the look of the geezer, Captain Rhama, the hero of Galleon, is not a pirate. He's a sailor along the lines of Sinbad. Rhama is all confidence and a bit cocky; is capable of beating the crap out of monsters 10 times his size, proving he has balls like melons, and thus has a lady clinging to each leg at all times (that means two ladies – Rhama is not a freak). Trust us, you're gonna like Rhama straight away.

Our heroic explorer's commission is handed to him by an aging mage, Areliano, who lives on the small Island of Akbah. This old buzzard calls for Rhama when he discovers a strange Galleon moored to the shore. If Rhama can fathom the Galleon's origin, Areliano will pay a handsome reward... plus he offers the assistance of his

You get to kiss Mihoko as much as you like here to get some air. We ain't lying!

Hope I don't end up pushing this thing around for nothing... giz a snog for a reward

This is the evil dude that's keeping Mihoko prisoner, before Rhama enters the scene

Mihoko is a right moody old cow wearing this

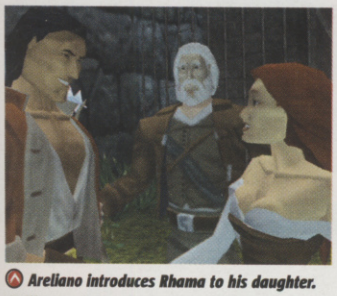
Every great seafaring adventure tale requires a storm like this one

horny daughter Faith. With that, it was always a done deal! Faith is more than just a sexy stooge: she studies magic with her father, which comes in handy throughout the voyage. Areliano's girl is also not shy about beating heads when necessary.

The scene is set for Rhama to endure everything Toby Gard can throw at him, which should amount to a succession of Most Memorable Moments that Lara Croft was denied. From what we've played, this involves a great deal of gameplay variation, incorporating a heavy helping of puzzle solving and equal parts swashbuckling. The worlds we've glimpsed are glorious, the scenarios intriguing, and the clever control system is a joy.

WALK BEFORE U CAN RUN

We said you'll like Rhama, and that's not just because of his swagger. The way he gets around is impressive too. Every step he takes, walking or running, is governed by momentum. This means that whichever way you nudge the stick Rhama will roam and rarely put a foot wrong.


Areliano introduces Rhama to his daughter. He'll regret it for the rest of his life, probably

We're not sure what's going on here but we doubt they're dancing the Lambada

With each strike in a combo Rhama's hands begin to glow

He'll take cautious steps if you push gently, run hell for leather or back-flip and so on if pushed forcefully.

IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

If Rhama heads full-tilt in a forward direction he will, over time, gather speed. You'll need this to make long-ass jumps, or to topple multiple enemies in fights with his wicked clothesline manoeuvre. It may sound complicated but it isn't, it's dead intuitive and takes seconds to pick up.

He also takes care of the jumping and scrambling for foot and hand-holds. All you need worry about is route-finding and problem-solving. The mastery of complicated control stuff is reserved for the fights, and issuing commands to other characters that might assist you.

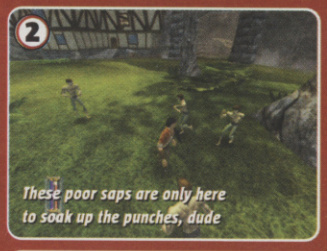
All this amounts to an original gameplay experience, with enough familiarity to prevent it being uncomfortably odd. In Galleon it seems Toby Gard and Confounding Factor have respected the Holy Laws of Gaming as laid down by Nintendo, plus added a range of smart solutions all their own. We dare say Galleon could end up a priority buy for any Xbox player, and we'll keep you posted with news on Cube and PS2 versions.

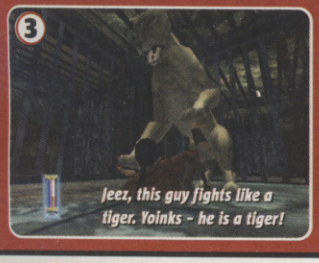
CONCERNING THE SURVIVAL OF SCRAPES

You'll find that Rhama's combat controls are simple, but their uses are many. You only use two buttons: one for attack, the other to grab or hold. Plain standing and attacking results in punches followed by kicks if you get the timing right.

Stand next to a guy/ghoul and holding sets you up for knees and elbows, but most entertaining are the throws – you can launch these suckers into walls or even at each other. The more Rhama fights, the more techniques are available to him.

1 Looks like Rhama is trying a Clothesline on this giant


2 These poor saps are only here to soak up the punches, dude


3 Jeez, this guy fights like a tiger. Yoinks – he is a tiger!

4 Swordplay is another of Rhama's martial skills

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CVG OPINION

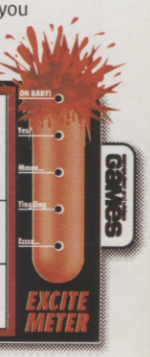
First impressions: Wow! You soon get to like the distinctive visual style, lending itself to amazing worlds and kick-ass characters. **Paul**

WE LOVE

- Controls feels fresh
- Kept on your toes by challenges
- As sexy as Lara ever was

WE HATE

- GC and PS2 versions?
- Nothing else
- Are you deaf? Nothing else



The Hellspawn just keep on coming. But that's Hellspawn for you

Hibana demonstrates how to use a giant toothpick

Never mind those fatty ads, these are the real dangers of smoking. Arf

How's that for a textbook flying kick?

NIGHTSHADE

- PUBLISHER SEGA
- DEVELOPER SEGA
- OUT: MARCH

ONLINE GAMING

IN A NUTSHELL

A traditional hack 'n' slash adventure from the legendary Shinobi stable. As the lithe and lovely Hibana, use a library of superhuman ninjitsu moves to protect the world from demons.

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

WWW.SEGA-EUROPE.COM

So much for ninjas being about the deadly art of silence. Nightshade's Hibana creates such a racket decking demons that you half expect the neighbours to complain. Using eye-blurring speed dashes, baddie nuking ninjitsu spells and a whirlwind of skull-splitting sword combos, this shapely lass makes Spider-Man look about as threatening as the Teletubbies.

The latest instalment to Sega's long-running Shinobi series, Nightshade is classic hack 'em up gaming straight from the old-skool. The aim is simple – rid the city streets of Hell's nasties, this time playing as a new female lead with a bottom that even the Cheeky Girls would envy.

Hibana's superhuman manoeuvrability is the game's high point. The sprightly heroine can stick to walls, pirouette mid-air and perform spectacular 'stealth' sprints so fast even her shadow struggles to keep up. Still, while Olympics gymnastics may please the eye, they can be pretty useless on their own in a scrap, so Hibana also has a bunch of sword, kick and 'special' attacks at her disposal.

LADY KILLER

Basic swipes are deadly enough to trouble lesser foes, while the more elaborate stunts, such as the eight-way 'Shuriken Star' shower, are best reserved for furious mass-scale brawls.

While the fighting action seems brutal enough, the few levels we played were pretty repetitive, with originality and lateral thought very much at a minimum. Mind you, with a sexy female star crammed into a figure-hugging suit, should you really be complaining too much? We'll leave that one to your discretion. CVG

Unleash magic to take out multiple foes

It's just another day at the office for a superstar ninja

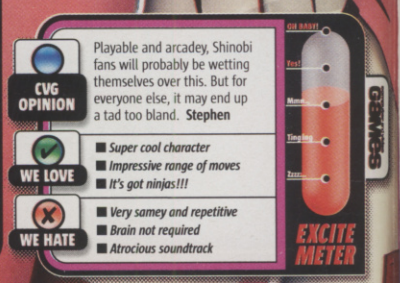
JEEPERS CREEPERS

So now we know what happened to all those old '50s B-Movie monsters – they all got sent to Hell!

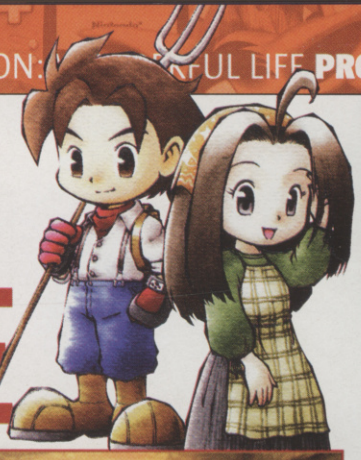
Judging by the Hellspawn featured in Nightshade, Satan's demonic underworld is a graveyard for all the giant insects, overgrown snake-like things and other such oddities from those cult sci-fi flicks of yesteryear.

End-of-level bosses can be right slime-bags. So pack 'em back to eternal damnation

We doubt fly spray will take out this monstrosity



HARVEST MOON: WONDERFUL LIFE



■ PUBLISHER
UBI SOFT
■ DEVELOPER
NATSUME
■ OUT: MARCH

IN A NUTSHELL

Just what the world has been crying out for – a farming sim game on GameCube. Grow crops and raise livestock, and if your cows get mardy, give them a hug. Just to cheer them up, like...

AVAILABLE ON
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

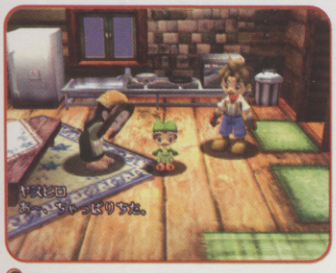
WWW.HMFARM.COM

To CVG, farming is just something else to avoid on TV, along with University Challenge and anything with Simon Cowell in it. Still, we used to hate stuff like Neighbours, then The Sims came out and look at how popular that is. Farming, we're forced to admit, makes for healthy gaming – at least in the form of Natsume's Harvest Moon series. But be warned: friends will be able to smell this one on your clothes after mere seconds of voluntary exposure.

WE ARE HAPPY COWS

You have to understand that farming makes no sense to anyone here, least of all the farming lifestyle. So, you know, raising cows, sheep and chickens while digging dirt, growing turnips and whatnot just to get the girl feels really odd. We like our RPGs to show us where the dragon/evil robot/dark wizard lives and we eventually go kill it. Then we get the girl. A Wonderful Life is even a departure from previous Harvest Moon adventures, in that it is completely open-ended. In fact it has gone the way of a pure simulation, with no specific ending.

It's pretty damn obvious why he likes coming to this place



When can I strap this little 'un to a plough?

Learn when cows are good for milking. Nice

You inherit the farm from your Dad, and through a friend you're introduced to the locals, who you're told are 'weird'. And they are, too: a doctor who could be Frankenstein, a metallurgist who could be Frankenstein's monster, a stinking tramp who tries to get freebies, and so on. All these guys will help you in your toils, but if you're looking for a regular workforce the Harvest Sprites are who you need. They'll make sure the crops and livestock stay healthy.

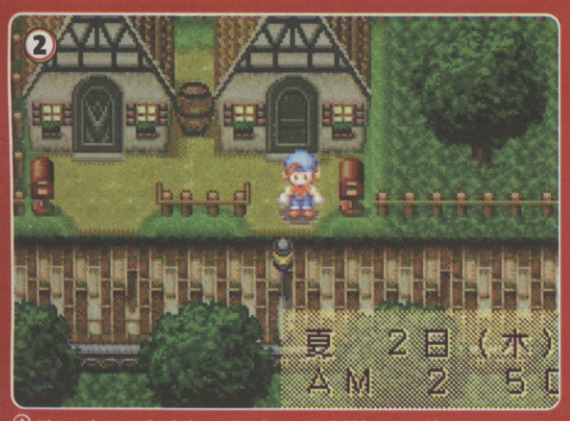
You've got 30 years to build the kind of farm that rural chicks will just love. The trick is knowing the right time for everything to function perfectly. Also give all your livestock hugs to keep them happy – happy cows give the best milk, y'see. CVG

OUTSIDERS

If you own a GBA, there's also Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town to look out for.

It's closer in style to the earlier HM games, so fun in itself, but the reason we mention it is because you can hook it up to your GC with Wonderful Life, exchange stuff and let people travel between one game and the other. Which is cool.

Looks like this map keeps track of your dog



It's nearly 3am, the dude must've been out clubbing somewhere

CVG OPINION

Obviously not everyone's glass of Scrumpy, but fans will relish it. And if you're in need of something vastly different, and good even, this'll do it. **Paul**

WE LOVE
- If you get into it you get hooked
- Characters that are deliberately dippy, raising genuine chuckles

WE HATE
- Farming, basically
- Romance sucks on its own. With farming, it's worse

EXCITE METER

PRO RUGBY MANAGER 2004

■ PUBLISHER
DIGITAL JESTER
■ DEVELOPER
CYANIDE STUDIOS
■ OUT: MARCH

AVAILABLE ON PC CD ROM

WWW.PRORUGBYMANAGER.COM

If you've been wishing for the squished ball equivalent of Championship Manager, this could well be it.

Pro Rugby Manager 04 features over 100 club and 50 national teams, and you can play in all the world's major rugby tournaments – including the Tri-Nations and, of course, the World Cup. Although it's purely about management, there is a 3D game engine to see your plays in action, and if you think you're good enough you can take your team online to compete against others. If you want authentic, get someone to bite your ear while you're at it!

You get to play as or with Jonny Wilkinson, depending on how you want to look at it

We have to say the 3D real-time egg-chasing action looks the mutt's nuts

When your boys are done tearing at each other's balls you can repair them here

WE LOVE
- Official licences for teams
- Attractive 3D graphics
- Clean presentation

WE HATE
- Nothing especially, all good
- Okay, it's rugby and we don't quite get it

EXCITE METER

WARNING! THIS SEQUEL WILL HOLD YOU HOSTAGE

Sam Fisher, back working for Third Echelon and definitely loving it

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

- PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT
- DEVELOPER: UBI SOFT
- OUT: MARCH

ONLINE GAMING | x4

IN A NUTSHELL

The only stealth 'em up deserving equal status alongside Metal Gear Solid 2 gets a sequel – and thankfully, we didn't have to wait for another console to be invented just to play it. Basic formula remains the same for one-player, though with more treacherous scenarios to bring you down. A new multiplayer mode holds the most promise.

AVAILABLE ON XBOX

ALSO ON PS2, GC, PC

WWW.PANDORATOMORROW.COM

With light behind you you're harder to see

There are more places to hide in SCPT

Rain gives good cover for small noise

Help! If anyone is reading this, please help! We're being held against our will by some evil masterminds who call themselves Ubi Soft. They've given us this game Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow to play and we can't return to our lives until it is completed. We are completely at this game's mercy. Please, if you're reading this, help us!

We doubt even Splinter Cell's Special Ops tough guy Sam Fisher could figure this out: a bunch of hostages who'd rather get shot than be free of their prison. This is exactly how CVG feels with the latest code of Pandora Tomorrow, which has us superglued to the Xbox. Believe it or not, we occasionally do some work here at CVG, but when a game like PT comes around, there's only one thing on our mind: Play! Play! Play!

Bollocks! Chaff grenade. Better move quick before you get nailed

DON'T LOOK INSIDE

You may have seen Pandora Tomorrow referred to as Splinter Cell 1.5, meaning that it's not really a true sequel, only a half step beyond the original. But this casts unnecessary shadows over the good stuff that's on offer. Okay, you're never going to get a 100 per cent step forward with the same technology, but you can enhance the experience in every conceivable way. And we think Ubi Soft has clearly achieved this with Pandora Tomorrow.

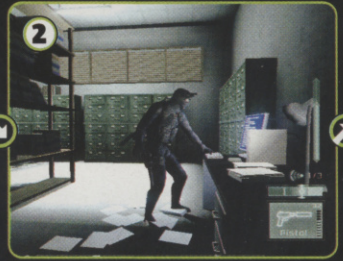
The original Splinter Cell remains one of the best-looking games on Xbox, so with just a casual glance it can be tricky to notice the improvements made to this sequel. Fisher looks identical, apart from a change of outfit. The detail on the non-player characters looks about the same too. You don't really stop to think about improvements in the environments until Sam's wading through a plantation and the leaves are parting above him. Or when, in a deserted tube station, everything starts shaking and debris flies everywhere accompanied by strobe lighting. All around you the level of detail is that little bit better, and light and shadow is used to pick out your route. Nothing especially jumps out at you, but overall it looks immense. In fact, show us a better-looking game, and we'll show you a room with padded walls.

THAT OUGHTA DO IT!

If you thought proximity mines were the biggest pain the ass, wait until you meet the motion-detecting flashbulb thing. The devices used to ensnare Fisher are super sneaky in Pandora Tomorrow.

Not many are new, but those that are will test your nerve. By far the most nerve-wracking are the trip wires encountered in the drug camp. You need to use your thermo-vision, plus feel the vibration through the controller to detect them. Guaranteed that wherever you want to make a run for it, there's some gadget or another trying to slow you down.

Okay, so a torch isn't exactly high tech, but you don't want to be caught in its beam



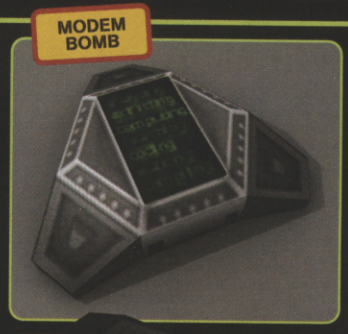
Before you start hacking away, make sure there's no camera spying on your ass

The biggest surprise here is the enemy AI itself, as he grabs a hostage to counter yours

AN ALADDIN'S CAVE OF 'TOYS'

We thought you'd like to take a look at some of the gadgets available to Third Echelon agents out in the field. Easily as cool as anything you'll see in Alias!

All of these feature in the excellent multiplayer mode, so you can have dastardly fun setting up your mates for a rendezvous with Mr Proximity Mine, and Auntie ND133. Heh heh.



HERE IS THE NEWS

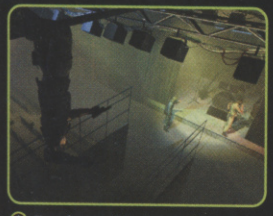
When you've got a game as tight as Splinter Cell – as in meticulously planned and well worked – there's always a danger of ruining it with dumb-ass features for the sake of dumb-ass features. Pandora Tomorrow avoids this trap by enhancing its existing features – such as the thermo and normal views on the optical cable, and Sam's ability to clamber up to higher ledges from a split-jump position. There are very few completely new features, but the few that have been included have wide-reaching effects on the way the game is designed. Sam's SWAT Turn, and hanging upside down to shoot are not only essential to survive in some areas but really strengthen your belief that Sam Fisher kicks ass.

After completing the original Splinter Cell, including all the downloadable extra missions Kola Cell and the Submarine, we realised that some items and techniques weren't necessary at all. With Pandora Tomorrow we've already seen that you'll be reaching for every tool in the box to get the job done.

THE ALARM YO-YO OF DOOOOM!

In the last Splinter Cell you had three clear-cut chances to raise an alarm and get away with it. After the third you were struck out, mission over. For Pandora Tomorrow the system has changed to three stages of alert, influencing the behaviour of the enemy AI.

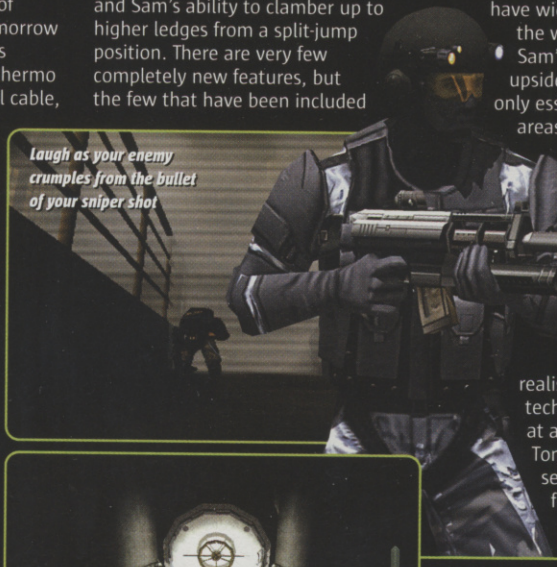
At the highest level of alert, enemies will don protective helmets and jackets making it hard to take them down, and they'll also abandon their posts and come looking for you. If you lie low for a while, the alert level decreases and you buy yourself more time. But you could even use this to your advantage...



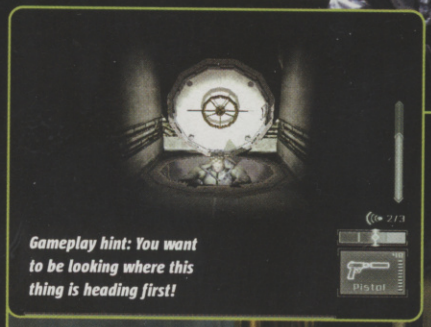
Hanging upside down while shooting is one of the new ways Sam can stay invisible

Don't alert these guys or they could trigger an alarm, and someone will come for you

You could make a run for it, but you could go ploughing into a tripwire



Laugh as your enemy crumples from the bullet of your sniper shot



Gameplay hint: You want to be looking where this thing is heading first!

If you're feeling confident, why not whistle to make him turn around?

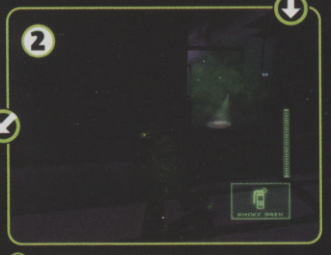
SHADOWNET DUDES ROCK!

PT multiplayer stands a chance of being 100 per cent brilliant. It allows first-person players to compete against others using third-person. As a Shadownet Spy (working for the same organisation as Sam), you're playing cat and mouse with an inventory of kick-ass stealth-based weapons.

Mercs who play in first-person have the speed and accuracy, and only need to find you in their sights once to pick you off. Online with Xbox Live the headset is used in cool ways, which include communication breakdowns and being able to sneak up to someone and whisper in their ear while you hold them hostage.

Check it out buddy, I've put a bead on your back. These weapons rock, hey buddy?

Shadownet Spies benefit from team tactics when in the field of duty...



This gunk will illuminate him with phosphorous, making him easy to spot

...but they obviously backfired here. Make use of the voice comm feature to survive

Look out you mercs, we're the feckin' A-Team, alright! Gonna do yer! Yeah!

...but think how cool it is to outwit them too, jamming their HUD with static fuzz

Look at how much fun you can have as a spy, there's no easy way through here...

NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

Prepare to sweat over every single step you take in Pandora Tomorrow. It feels like certain death has both hands clamped round your head and is staring you in the eye, clammy breath and all. Even if you're a Splinter Cell pro, Pandora Tomorrow will test your skill from the very beginning.

Even the first mission, classed as 'Training', has you in the thick of the action. You're skulking around an Indonesian Village, aiming to extract info from one of the hostages being held in the US Embassy. Now, in any other game, you'd be given carte blanche to kill the bad guys, save the good guys, but here you must keep clean out of it, picking your way around undetected by armed guards. At one crucial point, the only way you can gain entry to the embassy is to creep along in the shadows at the very edge of the light spilling from a doorway, while a guard stands watching at the door. Oh, and there's broken glass beneath your feet to make sure you go extra slow!

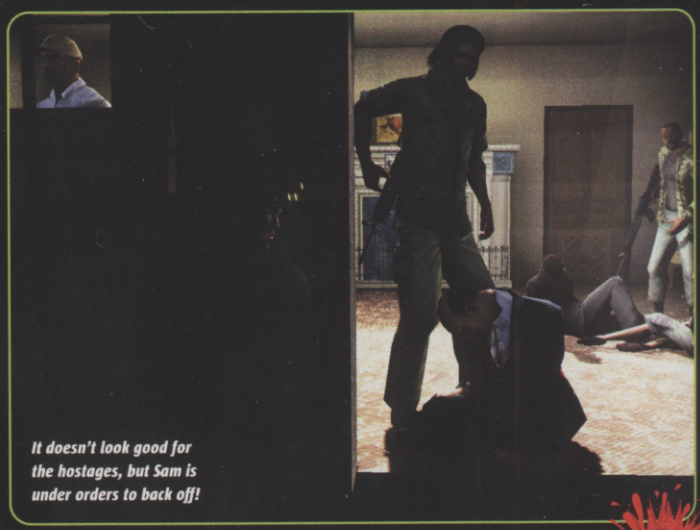
Such a high degree of restriction will drive anyone nuts over time, so you'll be glad to know the leash is loosened in other areas. In fact, one of the major overhauls to Splinter Cell has been to give a greater sense of freedom. Now there is often more than one route through each mission. This is most notable during a mission in a jungle-based narcotics farm. A network of shacks is crawling with guards, and the most direct approach is to run the gauntlet of dwelling places, taking down goons and feeling mighty Rambo. However, if you're smart about it you can sneak beneath gangways without being seen, conserving ammo and without risking health. Later in the level you can take a shortcut by rappelling down a wall, but gamble being spotted by a guard.

Jeezuss fella, you didn't have to drool all over me!

SAM THE MAN

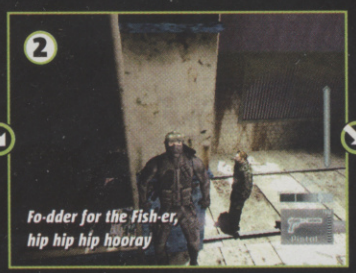
The most compelling aspect of Pandora Tomorrow is getting into the character of Sam Fisher, and this is significantly improved over Splinter Cell. Things like the SWAT Turn (which enables Sam to flit across doorways without being noticed) give you more options. In one mission Sam uses it to let innocents remain undisturbed; in another it offers a way to sneak up on your prey. Way cool.

Fisher can now whistle to attract attention, so you can lure blokes away from the pack to take them out one by one. Again, it's just like being Rambo! The Half-Split Jump, because it allows Sam to shift his weight from side to side, lets him peak from more stealthy vantage points. Basically Sam's ability to stay invisible while getting the job done is enhanced a thousand times by only a few additions to his skills. And we've barely scratched the surface of how Sam's skills are exploited in the genius multiplayer mode. Rest assured you'll have a whole lot more to read about in our review next issue.

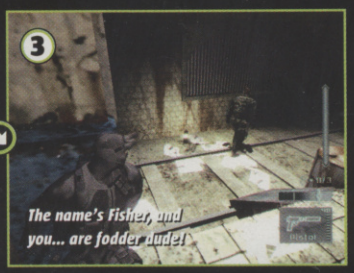


It doesn't look good for the hostages, but Sam is under orders to back off!

You're Fisher Fodder, mate. Just bidin' my time



Fo-dder for the Fish-er, hip hip hip hooray



The name's Fisher, and you... are fodder dude!

CVG OPINION

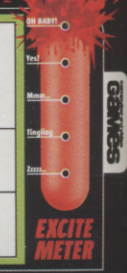
Tougher than the original, but easy enough to pick up and grips you straight away. Is that it? Cool, we can get back to playing it now. **Paul**

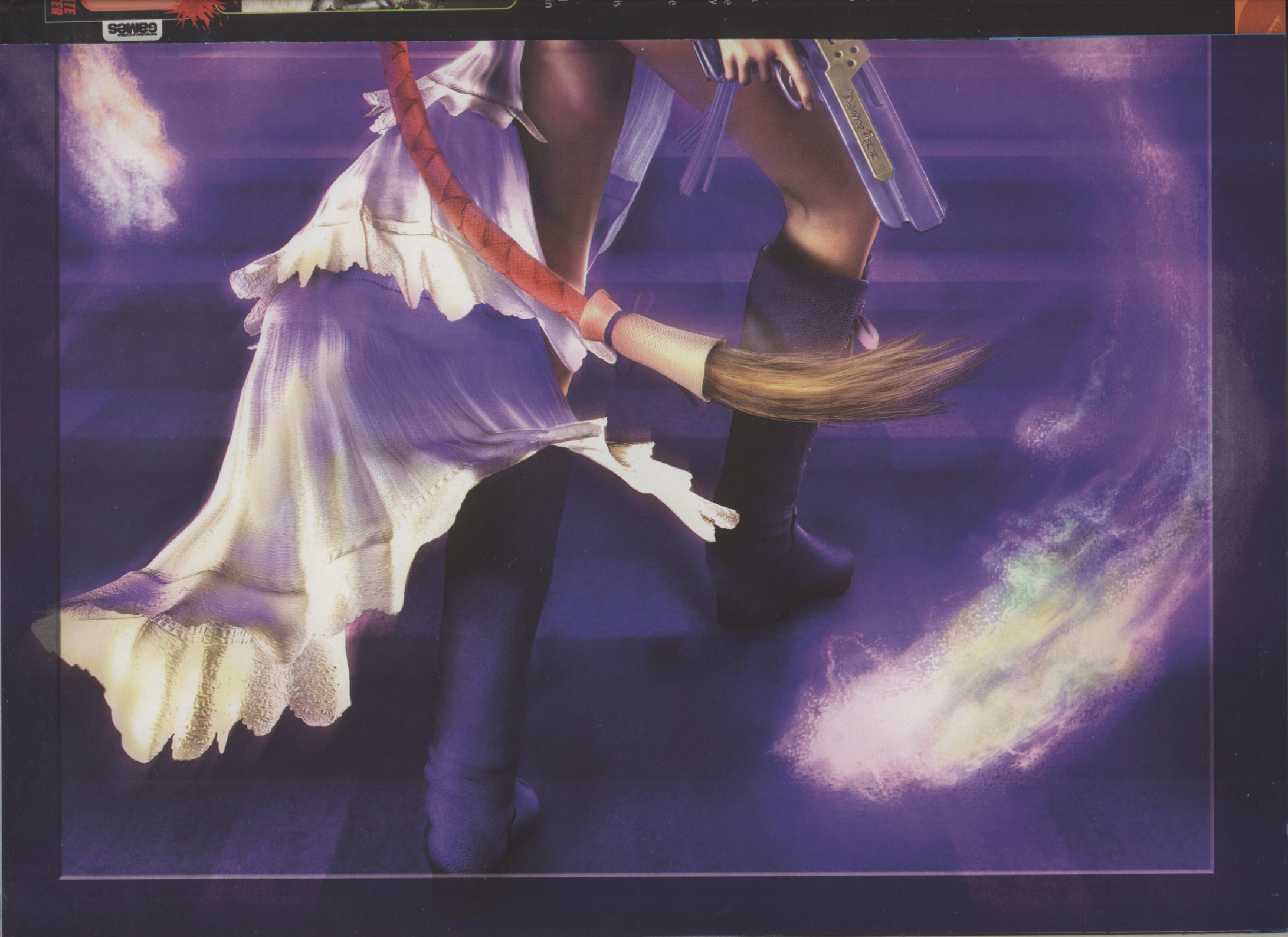
WE LOVE

- *Haemorrhoid-inducing stress*
- *Graphics of joy*
- *The multiplayer idea is top*

WE HATE

- *Learning curve is high*
- *You need enormous patience*
- *Multiplayer is best online*





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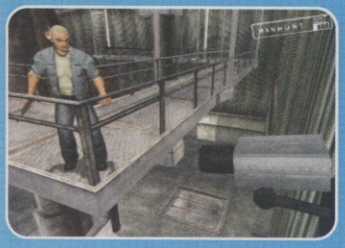
GET THE MOST OUT OF THE GAMES YOU'VE GOT

EXTENDED PLAY

From gravity-defying kung fu to death-defying World War Two gunfights, Ed 'I've got all the tips you'll ever need, guvnor' Zitron has got all the tips you'll ever need, guvnor...



MANHUNT

Note: these cheats are unlocked by getting five stars in a level; for example, completing level one and two will reward you with two pieces of artwork that produce one cheat (each artwork has half a cheat).

REGENERATE
R2, RIGHT, CIRCLE, R2, L2, DOWN, CIRCLE, LEFT

FULLY EQUIPPED
R1, R2, L1, L2, DOWN, UP, LEFT, UP

SUPER PUNCH
L1, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, R1

RUNNER
R2, R2, L1, R2, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT

SILENCE
R1, L1, R1, L1, RIGHT, LEFT, LEFT, LEFT

HELIUM HUNTERS
R1, R1, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, L2, L1, DOWN

MONKEY SKIN
SQUARE, SQUARE, R2, DOWN, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, CIRCLE, DOWN

PIGGY SKIN
UP, DOWN, LEFT, LEFT, R1, R2, L1, L1

RABBIT SKIN
LEFT, R1, R1, TRIANGLE, R1, R1, SQUARE, L1

SILENCE
R1, L1, R2, L1, RIGHT, LEFT, LEFT, LEFT

INVISIBILITY
SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, DOWN, SQUARE, DOWN, CIRCLE, UP

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

On the main menu, enter the following:

UNLOCK DRAG TRACKS
RIGHT, SQUARE, LEFT, R1, SQUARE, L1, L2, R2

UNLOCK DRIFT TRACKS
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, R2, R1, L2

UNLOCK CIRCUIT TRACKS
DOWN, R1, R1, R1, R2, R2, R2, SQUARE

UNLOCK SPRINT TRACKS
UP, R2, R2, R2, R1, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN

UNLOCK DRIFT PHYSICS
R1, UP, UP, UP, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN, L1

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

On the main menu, enter the following:

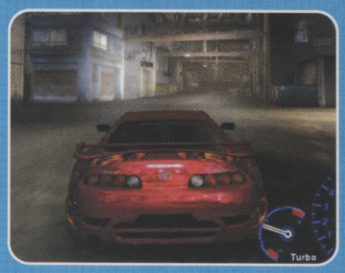
UNLOCK DRAG TRACKS
RIGHT, X, LEFT, R, X, L, WHITE, BLACK

UNLOCK DRIFT TRACKS
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, BLACK, R, WHITE

UNLOCK CIRCUIT TRACKS
DOWN, R, R, R, BLACK, BLACK, BLACK, X

UNLOCK SPRINT TRACKS
UP, BLACK, BLACK, BLACK, R, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN

UNLOCK DRIFT PHYSICS
R, UP, UP, UP, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN, L



NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

On the main menu, enter the following:

UNLOCK DRAG TRACKS
RIGHT, Z, LEFT, R, Z, L, Y, X

UNLOCK DRIFT TRACKS
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, X, R, Y

UNLOCK CIRCUIT TRACKS
Control Pad Down, R, R, R, X, X, X, Z

UNLOCK SPRINT TRACKS
UP, X, X, X, R, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN

UNLOCK DRIFT PHYSICS
R, UP, UP, UP, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN, L.

KYA: DARK LINEAGE

BONUS GALLERY ITEMS
Press TRIANGLE, UP, CIRCLE, RIGHT, DOWN, DOWN, SQUARE, LEFT at the main menu; every input gains you more items.

REFILL HEALTH
Pause and press L1, R2, L2, R1, UP, UP, LEFT, SQUARE, RIGHT, CIRCLE, START.

SHRINK JAMGUT
Pause and press R2, R2, CIRCLE, R2, L2, L2, LEFT, L2, TRIANGLE.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

To unlock the original Prince of Persia room, start a new game, and do not enter the palace room, and then...

Hold the left joystick left, and press GREEN, BLUE, YELLOW, RED, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, RED, A, X, Y, B, Y, A, X, B.

YOUR BEST TIPS

If you've got a star quality tip that you want to share or if you'd like our resident experts to answer a query, send it into us at:

CVGTIPS@DENNIS.CO.UK

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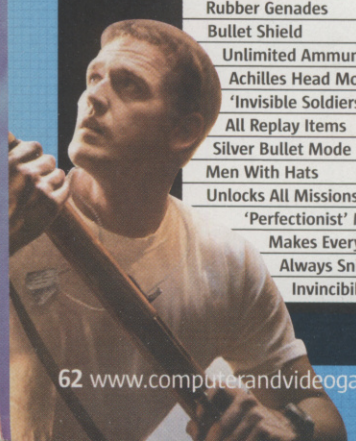
MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

We done gone dug up some juicy tips with our entenching tool, y'all

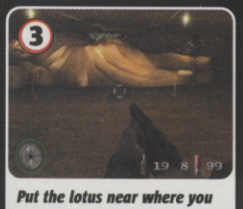
CHEAT	PS2	XBOX	GC
Rubber Genades	DAMSEL	BETTA	MOOR
Bullet Shield	TANG	WRASSE	GOURMAMI
Unlimited Ammunition	GOBY	JAWFISH	DISCUS
Achilles Head Mode	MANDARIN	CARDINAL	CICHLID
'Invisible Soldiers' Mode	TRIGGER	PARROT	ZEBRA
All Replay Items	GARIBALDI	BOXFISH	LOACH
Silver Bullet Mode	TILEFISH	BATFISH	PLECO
Men With Hats	SEAHORSE	DOTTYBACK	TETRA
Unlocks All Missions	BUTTERFLY	TUSKFISH	X
'Perfectionist' Mode	HOGFISH	X	BOTIA
Makes Everyone's Arms Huge	SPINEFOOT	X	X
Always Sniper Mode	PUFFER	X	X
Invincibility	X	BANNER	BENGAL



DIG IT!

Use the 'entrenching tool' to dig up cheats, like immortality

Take the lotus flower from the statue near the temple...



Put the lotus near where you freed the PoWs at the statue

A room to the right opens, and inside is the shovel!

Hold down L3, and press X, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, X, SQUARE, CIRCLE.

Hold B on the controller in slot 4 and on the controller in slot 1, enter A, B, Y, X, Y, A, B, X.

JAK II: RENEGADE

This classic's going cheap in the sales so if you ain't got it yet, snap it up NOW! CVG's tippage will help you see how many precursor orbs you need for the coolest cheats!

ORBS	CHEAT
5	Toggle Jak's Goatee
15	Mirror World
30	Big Head Mode
45	Small Head Mode
55	Scrap Book 1
65	Scene Player Act 1
75	Vulcan Fury Course
85	Scrap Book 2
95	Scene Player Act 2
105	Peace Maker Gun Course
115	Scrap Book 3
125	Scene Player Act 3
135	Reverse Races
145	Level Select
155	Unlimited Ammo
165	Unlimited Dark Jak
175	Invulnerability
200	Hero Mode

THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

When you enter in the unlock cheats gnome cheat, a gnome shall appear on your property. Enter in these codes to unlock various cheats that are activated by clicking on him. Note: He only sticks around for 30 minutes.

UNLOCK CHEATS GNOME
R2, L1, R1, L2, LEFT, CIRCLE
UNLOCK ALL LOCATIONS
R2, R3, L3, L2, R1, L1
UNLOCK ALL OBJECTS
L2, R2, UP, TRIANGLE, L3
FULL MOTIVES
R2, L1, R1, L2, LEFT, CIRCLE.
MORE MONEY (10,000)
L1, R2, RIGHT, SQUARE, L3
UNLOCK ALL SOCIALS
L1,R1,Down,X,L3,R3

UNLOCK CHEATS GNOME
DOWN, L, Z, R, LEFT, RIGHT
UNLOCK ALL LOCATIONS
DOWN, Z, R, L, Z
UNLOCK ALL OBJECTS
DOWN, Z, LEFT, RIGHT, R

UNLOCK CHEATS GNOME
L, BLACK, RIGHT, BLUE, LEFT
ALL LOCATIONS VISITED
BLACK, DOWN, R, L, DOWN, Y
UNLOCK ALL OBJECTS
BLACK, UP, Y, DOWN, R
FULL MOTIVES
R, LEFT, B, DOWN, WHITE
MORE MONEY (10,000)
L, BLACK, RIGHT, X, WHITE
ALL SOCIALS UNLOCKED
L, R, A, DOWN, BLACK

GOTCHA FORCE

Solo Battle: Beat the game once. Special Option (Battle Replay): Complete the game twice.

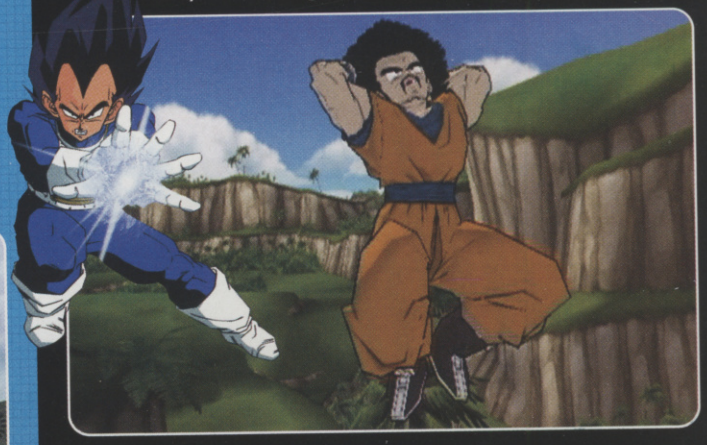
TO GET...	YOU HAVE TO...
Angel Nurse	Beat Mission 'Defeat the Angel and Girl Borg Unit'
Original Colour G-Red	Beat the game 3 times
Blue G-Red	Beat the game 4 times
Crystal G-Red	Beat the game 5 times
Silver G-Red	Beat the game 6 times
Gold G-Red	Beat the game 7 times
Shadow G-Red	Beat the game 8 times
Shadow Neo G-Red	Beat the game 9 times

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

ALL FMV
TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, X, X, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE
ALL FUTURE WEAPONS
X, X, X, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X
ALL PAST WEAPONS
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE
ALL STILL PICTURES
X, SQUARE, X, SQUARE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE
CENTIPEDE MINI-GAME
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE
COMPLETE MISSION
SQUARE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, X, SQUARE, TRIANGLE
FIGHT TX ENDOSKELETON IN EVERY BATTLE
TRIANGLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, X, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE
INVINCIBILITY
SQUARE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE, X, CIRCLE, X, CIRCLE
LEVEL SELECT
SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE
MISSILE COMMAND MINI-GAME
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, SQUARE, X, X
QUADRUPLED DAMAGE
TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X, CIRCLE, SQUARE
UNLIMITED AMMO
X, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, X, CIRCLE, X, SQUARE
VIEW DEV TEAM
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, X

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

Remember: You'll have to go through the Dragon World multiple times to get them all!



Unlockable Characters:

Yamcha	In Dragon World Stage 1, kill Nappa With Tien
Nappa	In Dragon World Stage 1, kill Nappa with Vegeta (Though this has to be done on your second trip, as Vegeta is unlocked in stage 3
Recoome	Beat him in Dragon World, Stage 2, with anyone
Vegeta	Beat him with Goku in Dragon World Stage 3
Captain Ginyu	Beat him with Vegeta on the Third Stage of Dragon World
Frieza	Beat him/her with Goku on Dragon World Stage 3
Adult Trunks	Beat Vegeta Stage 3
Dr. Gero	Simply defeat him on Dragon World Stage 4
Android #16	Defeat him with Goku on Dragon World Stage 4
Cell	Beat him with Goku on Dragon World Stage 4
Android #18	Beat her with Krillin on Dragon World Stage 4
Android #17	Beat him with Piccolo on Dragon World Stage 4
Great Saiyaman	Beat Cell with Gohan on Dragon World Stage 4
Supreme Kai –	Beat him with Goku on Dragon World Stage 5
Majin Vegeta	On Dragon World Stage 5, beat any of the characters Babidi controls within two rounds, to unlock the Babidi's Mind Control capsule, that turns them into their Majin forms
Hercule	Beat Majin Buu on Dragon World Stage 6 with The Great Saiyaman
Videl	Let Buu absorb Gohan on Dragon World Stage 8, and then beat him with Hercule
Teen Gohan	Beat Cell with Gohan on Dragon World Stage 9

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

Looksy-here, lots of cheats for Tony Hawk's Underground, because you really want to see the developers' ugly mugs, right?

Enter these on the cheats menue	
Unlock all movies	digivid
Perfect manual	keepitsteady
Perfect rail balance	Letitslide
Moon gravity	getitup

Enter these as the name of a create-a-skater to unlock the developers (Note: They're case-sensitive)	
Aaron Skillman	Skillzombie
Chris Ward	leedsleedsleeds
Dave Cowling	TOPBLOKE
Jesse Shannon	Y2KJ
Kurt Gutierrez:	sik
Michelle Deyo	WOODCHUCK
Ralph D'Amato	deadendroad
Steve Ganem	The Kraken
Ted Barber	Hammer

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR PLAYERS' GUIDE

The war's invisible, but Richie will help you see it through to the end...

SPOILER ALERT!!!!

We were all set to plough through a full walkthrough to Deus Ex: Invisible War. But seeing as most of the game is pretty easy, and the fun is in finding all the multiple ways to accomplish the missions and exploring the various endings, we thought we'd give you a few general hints on playing so you have more fun along the way, plus how to find the secret weapons and what to do with your biomods.

1 SECURITY COUNTER-MEASURES

You can use EMP grenades and Multitools to disable security cameras and energy beams, but why bother when you can avoid them without having to waste valuable equipment? Cameras have a limited view so always stay in the shadows and approach them only when they are facing away from you. Wait underneath for it to make another sweep, or if you are sure there are no enemies around to hear, whack it with something and destroy it. Have a weapon ready anyway – if the camera does see you then you'll only have a second to smash it before the alarm is raised.

If you're out of Multitools and the door won't open...

... try a grenade instead. Oh dear, that camera's on the move

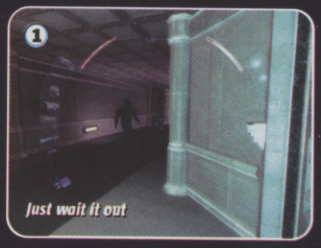
Stay in the shadows. Why waste a tool?

2 YOU SHAFTY BUGGER

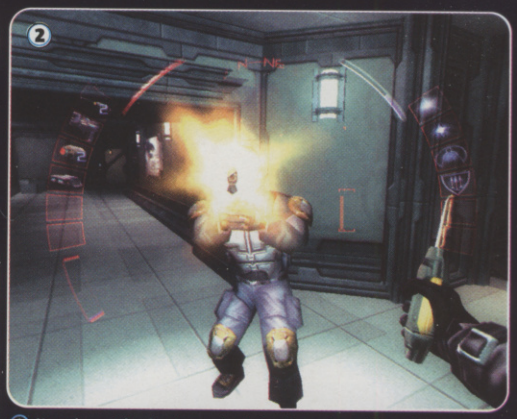
Not only useful for air circulation, vents in Deus Ex usually mean there's another way into what be a heavily guarded area, invariably a better one. If you see a grate always check it out and if it's dark, turn on your light mod. There may be a couple of nasties in the shafts, but they are generally weak. Do remember to pull back the grate behind you, otherwise a quizzical guard might wander by and investigate further.

3 GOONS ON PATROL

Guards are predictable. If out in the open, watch from a safe distance and sneak ahead when they're out of earshot. If you can't see, listen out for steps and move out when things get a bit quieter.



Just wait it out



It you're getting beaten up trudging through corridors, look around for crates. Sometimes you can stack them and jump up across the rooftops where the guards won't be able to follow.

4 THE WAY OF THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

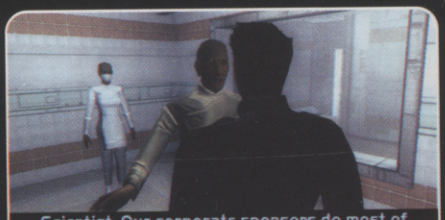
If you like a challenge, it's possible to complete the game without having to kill anyone (even robots and the Omar can be shut up with EMP weapons). To do so you must endeavour to be as sneaky as possible by crawling through ventilation shafts, using cloaking mods and non-lethal weapons like the Baton and the Stun Prod. The Stun Prod will deplete your stock of ammo, but if you're a pacifist this won't be much of a problem.

Don't worry about this poor guy, the damage isn't permanent

5 EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE

Invisible War certainly rewards the cautious and if you're prepared to listen, dozens of NPCs are happy to fill you in on their life story. When you do speak to a character, take the time to exhaust all the dialogue options – they may be hiding something and depending on who you've allied yourself with previously, it could take some serious verbal excavation to prize important information from them.

In this game weapons, ammo and items aren't left spinning in the middle of the floor like they are in other games. In fact all the best items are usually hidden from view. Pick up everything you can – you never know what's hidden underneath chairs or dead bodies.

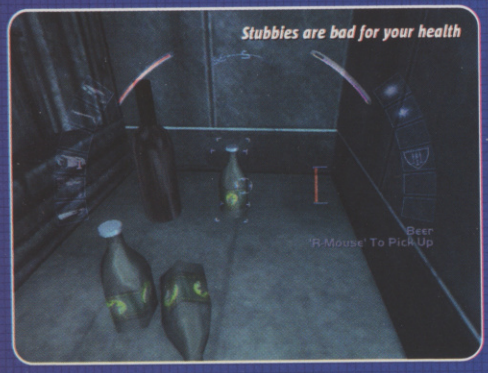


Scientists can be very talkative

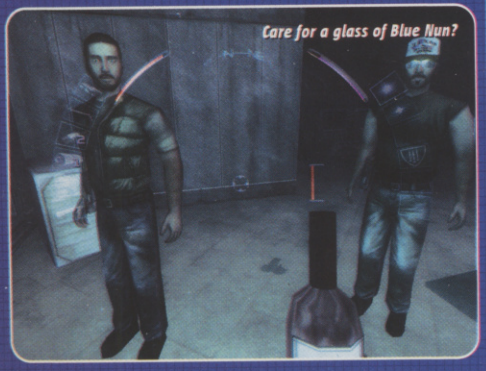
Yadda yadda yadda. On and on

6 EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY

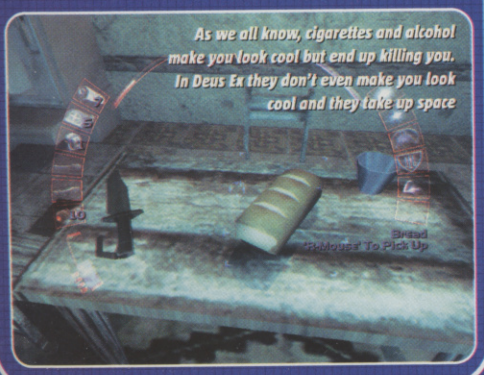
Medikits are an obvious source of health points and the Health Leech is a favourite way to replenish life points. However one lesser known way to claw back your health is a clever use of the Neural Interface Biomod. Normally it allows you to hack into terminals, take control of cameras and other electrical static items, but it also allows you to hack into snack and drinks machines, which will pour out their contents across the floor – plenty enough for you to max out your health and fill up your inventory for a future emergency.



Stubbies are bad for your health



Care for a glass of Blue Nun?



As we all know, cigarettes and alcohol make you look cool but end up killing you. In Deus Ex they don't even make you look cool and they take up space

7 SECRET ENDING

So you want to see all the endings but don't want to play through the game again? Just save the game when you arrive on Liberty Island; the final outcome of the game depends only on the actions you make in the final level.

There is also a secret 'party' ending, which is very probably the only uplifting conclusion you'll get to see. To access it you need to take the flag from the UNATCO ruins and drop it close to the toilet near to Manderley's old office. And flush.

Do as we say and take this here flag...

Now, welcome to the party at the end of the world. Minors seem to be welcome at this gig. Oh, and aliens

...to the dunny and pull the lever. If you're an alien-loving tree-hugger, save energy by having a dump first

They may've only just met, but this honey SO hates JC's nano-augmented, pussy-assed jiving. Why? It saves time

8 CLASS ACTION

Invisible War doesn't feature character classes as such, instead it allows you to play in any style of you wish. However, if you're a particular type of player or are looking for a challenge, try sticking to this Biomod guide and see if you can complete the game using only these 'classes'. Melee is a lot of fun, while Pacifist might prove to be rather tricky.

BIOMOD SLOT	MELEE	STEALTH	WEAPONS	PACIFIST	HACKER
Arm	Strength	Bot Domination	Biotox Attack Drone	Biotox Attack Drone	Bot Domination
Cranial	Cloak	Cloak	Neural Interface	Neural Interface	Neural Interface
Eye	Vision Enhancement	Regeneration	Regeneration	Spy Drone	Vision Enhancement
Leg	Speed Enhancement	Move Silent	Health Leech Drone	Health Leech Drone	Health Leech Drone
Skeletal	Electrostatic Discharge	Thermal Masking	Aggressive Defence Drone	Thermal Masking	Thermal Masking

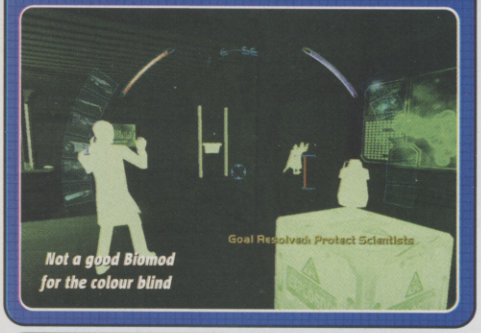
9 CVG'S FAVE BIOMODS

SPY DRONE

This Black Market implant allows you to case ahead using a drone that is hard for most enemies to detect and can even take out Bots and turrets with its EMP weapon.

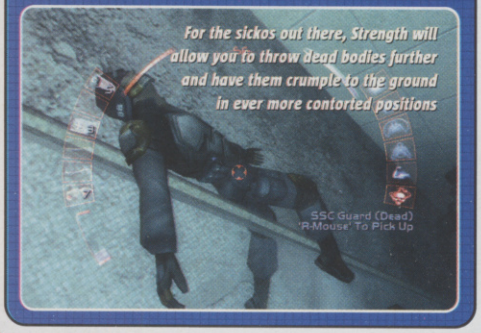
VISION ENHANCEMENT

This is probably the best mod for those new to the game, especially if you can quickly upgrade it to Level Three when it allows you to see enemies through walls.



STRENGTH

It's not the most exciting Biomod going but you will need as much equipment as you can carry and this allows you to increase your inventory which means more weapons will be at your disposal.



10 CVG'S FAVE WEAPON MODS

AMMO SCAVENGER

You'll need as much ammo as you can get your hands on, so it makes sense to upgrade your favourite weapon with this mod. Best of all, this mod will work with most of the ranged weapons in the game, even the Flamethrower and Rocket Launcher

INCREASED DAMAGE

Just like the Ammo Scavenger, this weapon upgrade can be used with most of the weapons in the game and although it's effects are more useful than spectacular, together with the above you can almost kill the same amount of people with 50 per cent less effort.

GLASS DESTABILIZER

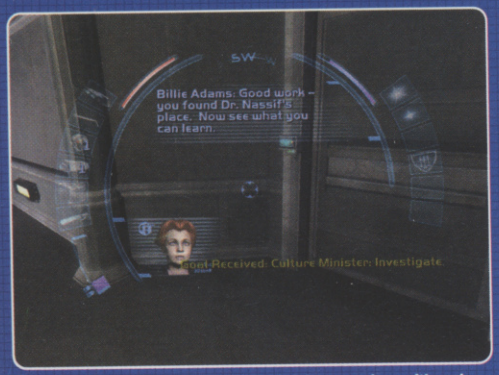
Most people would use a small brick, sadly in the future you'll need to use a special sonic device to shatter glass. This weapon mod is useful for quietly opening up new areas of the game. It's the weapon mod equivalent of a Korma air biscuit – silent but not deadly.

11 SECRET WEAPONS OF DX2

Alongside Deus Ex's regular arsenal, you'll find six special weapons scattered throughout the game. If you can't find them, here's how... Oh, and make sure you get the Dragon's Tooth Sword if nothing else. It rocks.

TOXIN BLADE: EMERALD SUITES, UPPER SEATTLE

The Blade can be found next door to Dr Nassif's apartment. Try the intercom first and if the occupant responds with a threat then you've found the right place. Enter through the nearby ventilation shaft, drop in through the roof and after you've dealt with the owner, take a peek under the pillow in the bedroom.



The Toxin Blade is worth finding as it injects a poison with each successive hit, proving to be a lethal alternative to the combat knife

RED GREASEL HUNTER: SEWERS, LOWER SEATTLE SLUMS

Outside the Inclinator facility you should be able to find a grate leading down into a dark sewer. Kill the beasties at the bottom and alongside the Omar corpse in the corner you'll find the Red Greasel Hunter.

Unlike the Mako Ballistics Pistol, which has to be upgraded, the Greasel Hunter is already equipped

ASSASSIN PISTOL: NINE WORLDS TAVERN, GERMANY

On entering the Nine Worlds Tavern, go past security clearance and go up the steps. After picking your way through the locked door you should find this scoped pistol hidden amongst the boxes.

Unlike the regular pistol, the Assassin pistol comes equipped with a telescopic sight

HELLFIRE BOLTCASTER: NASSIF GREENHOUSE, CAIRO

Within one of the large warehouse rooms in the Greenhouse is a ladder leading up to the offices. After disabling the beams, head up the steps and carry on until you get to a balcony overlooking the Greenhouse entrance. To the west you'll see some poles protruding from the opposite wall. Leap over, jump up to the platform above, up to the balcony, through the vent and down. The weapon will be hidden in the next room.

The Hellfire shoots incendiary ammunition that causes the unfortunate target to catch fire. A lot of fun

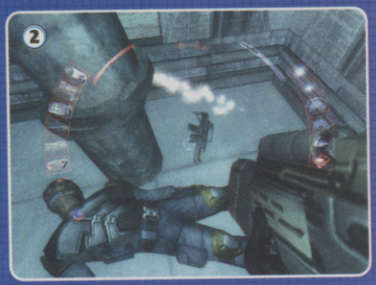
DRAGON'S TOOTH SWORD: JC'S SANCTUARY, ANTARCTICA

By far the best weapon from the original Deus Ex. On your travels through JC's consciousness, take a look above the bookcase when you reach his Hong Kong flat and you should see it stored there.

Wahey! Now it's off to the Lucky Money Club... Oops, sorry, wrong game

WIDOWMAKER SUB-MACHINE GUN: ARCOLOGY, CAIRO

On your second visit to the Arcology head for level 107-108, scoot down the Maintenance ramp and turn left. You should see a gap in the wall, through which is the Widowmaker.

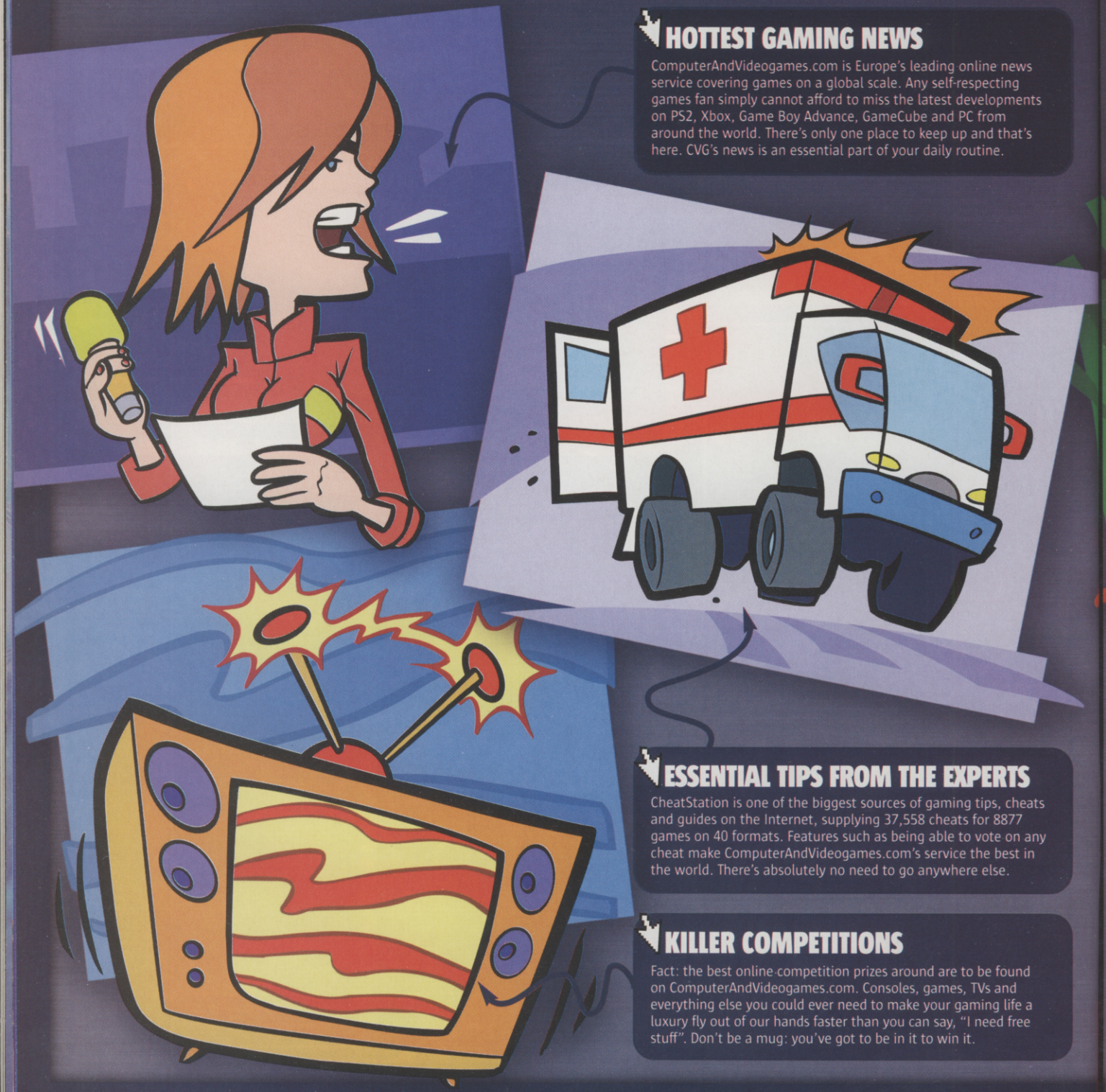


Instead of frag grenades, the Widowmaker launches Spiderbots

The street party gets into full swing at the launch of N-Gage DS PSP Turbo

LOG ON AND LOAD UP

Still hungry for more even after thumbing through this game-packed issue of CVG? Logging onto **ComputerAndVideogames.com** will satisfy the biggest gaming appetites



HOTTEST GAMING NEWS

ComputerAndVideogames.com is Europe's leading online news service covering games on a global scale. Any self-respecting games fan simply cannot afford to miss the latest developments on PS2, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, GameCube and PC from around the world. There's only one place to keep up and that's here. CVG's news is an essential part of your daily routine.

ESSENTIAL TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

CheatStation is one of the biggest sources of gaming tips, cheats and guides on the Internet, supplying 37,558 cheats for 8877 games on 40 formats. Features such as being able to vote on any cheat make ComputerAndVideogames.com's service the best in the world. There's absolutely no need to go anywhere else.

KILLER COMPETITIONS

Fact: the best online competition prizes around are to be found on ComputerAndVideogames.com. Consoles, games, TVs and everything else you could ever need to make your gaming life a luxury fly out of our hands faster than you can say, "I need free stuff". Don't be a mug: you've got to be in it to win it.

ON INFO!

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

There's no better place on the Web to meet like-minded people than on our forums. Feel the need to spout on about your passion? We have bulletin boards for PS2, Xbox, GameCube, Game Boy Advance, PC, Mac, PSone, Dreamcast, N64, music and film, cheats, our online ranking service CSports.net and a general place to talk games. Join the party right now!

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REVIEWS

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CVG EXPERT REVIEWERS

Team CVG is here to make sure you never buy a duff game

Steve O'Hagan
ORC FANCIER
Took time out from all of his New Year's Resolutionising to grace us with his presence for mammoth sized Goblin Commander sessions. He even brought his own twin flaggons of mead and droopy scimitar

Graeme Boyd
BOYD RACER
Our Graeme is bound by ancient scripture to defend the honour of the racing genre, but even he drew the line at Kirby Air Ride. Still, at least we finally found something to wipe the smile off Mr Ever-Grin's mug

Mike Cooper
BLING MEISTER
Coops loves his bling, so we figured he's gotta love Spyhunter's glossy transform-o-car. Will this sequel stand out like a Bacofoil bikini glinting in the eyes of CVG's very own glitter-obsessed magpie?

Paul Davies
SECRET AGENT
Paul cut his hair even shorter this month, maybe to make him tougher for his Bond review, maybe to scare us, or maybe so he could wear a wig identical to his old haircut (above). A sort of double bluff disguise

Maura Sutton
MUSHROOM WALLOPER
Lover of all things RPG, Maura loves nothing more than hitting demonic fungi in the face in her quest to level up. If you see her strolling around the New Forest, take cover. Or bring some garlic and a frying pan.

SPREAD THE RUDE GAMING LOVE

Press your nose up against your console. Have a good old sniff. I bet loads of you are experiencing what is officially known as 'New Console Smell' tickling your nose hairs right now. Machines unwrapped at Christmas are still fresh from the factory, barely months old and still enjoying your unbridled lovin'. And what better gift to bestow upon your new console this Valentine's than a month full of pretty damned great releases? Unusually for this time of year – the post-Christmas games drought – there are stacks of great games. No matter what type of game you enjoy, pretty much all the different genres are covered from puzzler to platformer, shooter, racing or role-player. Still no imported Japanese Date 'n' Seduction sims though. Damn...

LEE
Lee Skittrell
Games Editor

THIS MONTH

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WHAT THE SCORES MEAN

We only review the biggest, most bad-assed and best releases of the month, and our scores are based on one key measure: fun! This is how we break them down...

1	WHY, GOD, WHY?	6	FAIRLY SOLID BUT NOWT SPECIAL
2	STINKS. NEVER PLAY THIS	7	TASTY
3	A WASTE OF YOUR MONEY	8	QUALITY GAME. CONSIDER BUYING IT
4	MAYBE RENT, NEVER BUY	9	CLASS ON A DISC
5	VERY AVERAGE	10	AN ABSOLUTE MUST THAT DEFINES THE GENRE

CVG AWARDS SYSTEM

These accolades don't get dished out just because a game gets a certain score. They're CVG's way of telling you which are our pet hates and personal favourites.

CVG ESSENTIAL
The most coveted award a game can get. It's worth buying the console to play the game

CVG RECOMMENDED
A damn good game. It may not break the mould, but it's a cut above the rest

CVG GAME OF THE MONTH
Doesn't have to be the highest scorer, but it's CVG's pick of the bunch this month

CVG STINKER
More abominable than a Yeti

Even behemoth knights need to boogie sometimes

Castlevania

GAME INFO OUT: FEBRUARY 13 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: KONAMI ✶ DEV: KONAMI
WWW.KONAMI.COM/LAMENTOFINNOCENCE
REVIEWED ON PS2

AN OLD CLASSIC FINALLY RISES FROM THE DEAD TO A NEXT-GEN CONSOLE

A foul stench fills the dank air as strange shadows move restlessly in the darkest recesses of the room. The faintest rays of light cut harshly through the impenetrable bleakness and mysterious whiffy substances slither slowly down the cold, clammy walls. But even the CVG offices have nothing on the horrors that await you in the latest instalment of the Belmont legacy.

After the rubbish N64 games and the canned Dreamcast version (whoopsie), the Castlevania series has finally made it into 3D on a next-gen console. This time it's the turn of Leon

Smashing up torches gives health – like, dur!

The fiddly controls make jumping hellish

These ghouls favour an urban look, complete with hoody

That's one hell of a blade he's got there

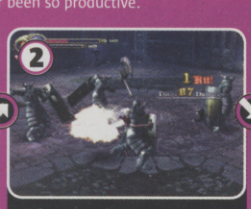
Rack up the combo hits and your power increases too

We bet Alan Titchmarsh never had this problem with shrubbery

GET YOUR ORBS OUT

Combining the orbs you pick up as you progress through the game with your other weapons will add that extra oomph to you arsenal. Playing with your balls has never been so productive.

If you're in a sticky situation, bring up the orb menu



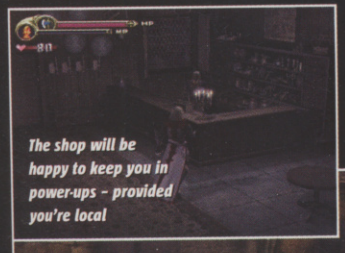
Orbs super-charge weapons to rain down ballistic attacks

Similarly, other weapons can be augmented, like this holy water

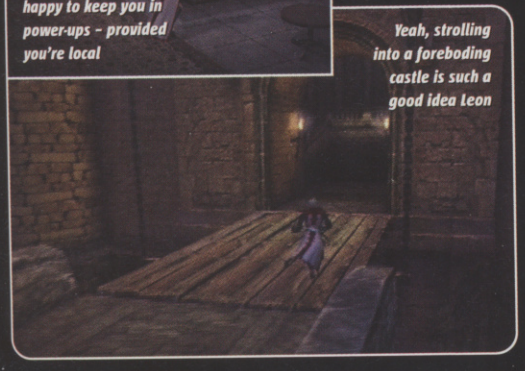
Leon spills enough claret to keep granny happy for a month

Access all the game levels here from the start - sort of spoils the fun

This is about as fraught as the platform action gets



The shop will be happy to keep you in power-ups - provided you're local



Yeah, strolling into a foreboding castle is such a good idea Leon

Belmont to take on the vampire force that's swamped the land with ferocious monsters and dragged his girlfriend off to some labyrinthine castle to boot. Looks like it's time to head into the woods and kick some freakish undead ass.

REMEMBER THE RAMPARTS?

Anyone who's ever battled their way through one of Castlevania's wickedly cool 2D outings will feel instantly at home here, despite the introduction of that crazy extra dimension. All the familiar game elements are present, from adrenaline-soaked battles with drooling, fang-toothed monstrosities, to brain-taxing exploration and key-collecting, not to mention heroic acrobatics over gaping chasms and other devious traps.

From the off, that old Castlevania atmosphere breathes softly on your exposed neck with its air of dread, lusciously detailed gothic environments and haunting musical score. You'll need gonads made from solid brass not to feel a deathly chill as you take on a fire-breathing hellhound in the drenching rain, with lightning illuminating the twisted gargoyles lining the crumbling battlements around you.

Monster-annihilation has always been the real meat of the Castlevania series and thankfully the new 3D combat system implemented here works a treat.

Initially, Leon has two basic attacks available - one a bone-shattering whip-thwack to a single foe, the other a handy spin that can take out several enemies at once. As you play, more powerful combo moves are unlocked, so it pays to experiment with your fighting style if you want a varied arsenal of devastation at your disposal.

Wooah! Nice combo!

Leon takes out the room with a well-timed guff

POWER AND THE GORY

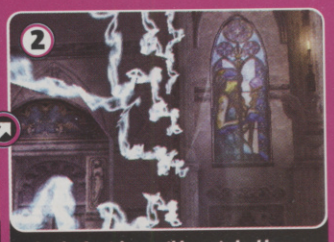
New for Castlevania on PS2 is an effective, streamlined power-up system. Defeating bosses earns you magical orbs that work in tandem with your secondary weapons. Crafty combinations of these elements can

JUMP FOR YOUR LIFE!

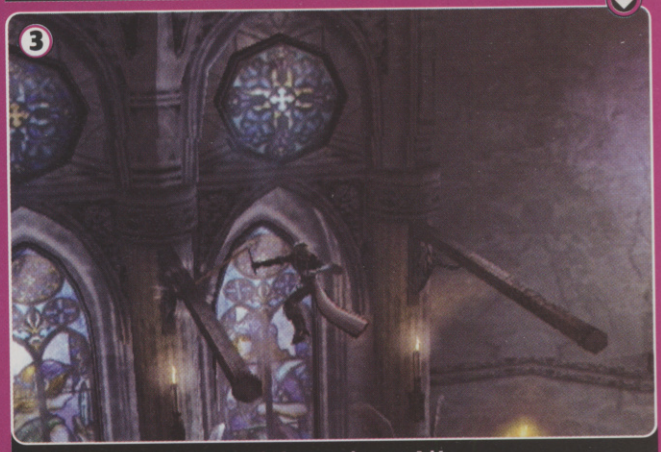
A couple of areas demand precision acrobatics to get through alive.

Between the awkward controls and epileptic camera though, you're likely to have more luck resurrecting the dead in your own back garden.

Smacking this here button unlocks the way forward...



...but it also triggers this nasty looking electrical field



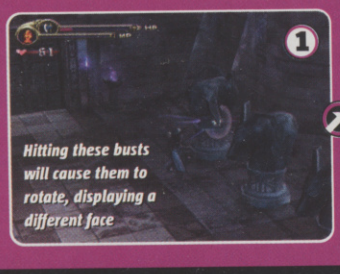
You've limited time to swing from the beams and escape. Ack!

MASTERMIND IT AIN'T

You'll need to crack a few puzzles to get through certain doors in the castle.

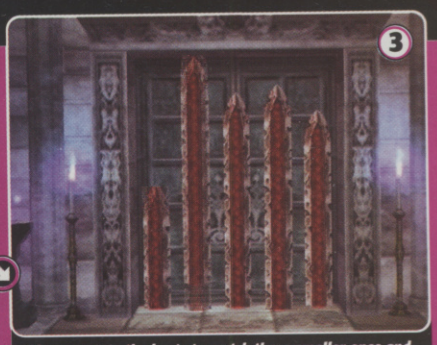
Mostly these involve stomping on a few buttons, but occasionally you'll have to fire up the old noggin to work things out.

The tile bottom right is the name of your opponent. Flea Man - oooh, scary!



Hitting these busts will cause them to rotate, displaying a different face

Dotted around the castle are a bunch of similar-looking statues. Hmmm. What could they be for...



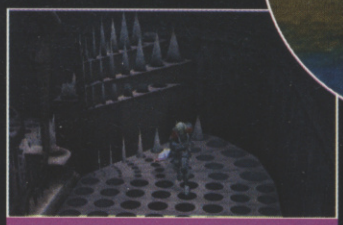
Oh yes, rotate the busts to match these smaller ones and clear the path ahead

Leon struggles with a case of the worms in this boss showdown

Some of the monsters are so big they barely fit on the screen

If a zombie puked on our carpet we wouldn't be happy either

create some truly apocalyptic attacks, each with its own strengths and weaknesses against various enemies. Use the blue orb with your axe for example, and hurl whirling blades of destruction that can take down an armoured knight in one fling – try using the same attack against a skeletal plant and you'll be tossing ineffectually all evening. Yak yak!



Leon narrowly avoids being violated by a trap

BATS ALL FOLKS

The combat system is so refined that carving up tides of the undead is absolute blood-soaked bliss – which is just as well, because you won't be doing a lot else during the course of the game. Unfortunately, the death-defying jumps and hair-raising platform action that the series is equally well known for have all but disappeared in this latest title.

Not only are these sections few and far between, most are insultingly easy – sprint away from the spikes, or casually step around a fireball. However, when the game does attempt something a little more taxing, the controls that seemed so perfect during combat suddenly make steering Leon feel like trying to drive a juggernaut through a tar pit. Simple tasks like jumping onto a button become an exercise in frustration when the default leap will hurl you halfway across the room. Worse still are the areas that require split-second timing as you use your whip to swing from beam to beam. Not only is the collision detection here flaky at best, but the camera seems intent on keeping your next destination firmly out of frame – quite why the logical fixed side-on perspective wasn't used is anyone's guess.

Without the meaty platforming, what's left is a superbly atmospheric slash 'em up slapped on top of some lavishly detailed, if uninspiring and repetitive, levels. The combat system is so good that many will have a blast simply hacking their way through the armies of festering undead. For anyone hoping that first true next-gen Castlevania will be the pinnacle of undead adventuring, however, should know there's some way left to travel on the road to Hellish perfection. CVG

GIMME MAGIC

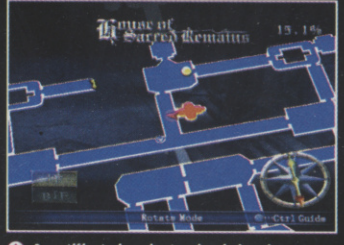
You'll find an assortment of magical artefacts strewn about the castle that'll give you the upper hand against certain enemies. You'll need to make sure Leon's Magic Points gauge is stocked up first though. Yes, that's the long purple one. No sniggering please.

When you see an enemy glow purple before an attack...

...hit block and your Magic Points gauge will rise on impact

When it's full, use a magical attack to crush the monstrous blight

If it all gets too frantic, run away – chicken, us?



A certificate in orienteering is handy

GAMES VERDICT

Dodgy platform sections and too much repetition threaten to spoil this beautifully atmospheric game. The combat system is so good though that you won't care. Dark and delish. **Matt**

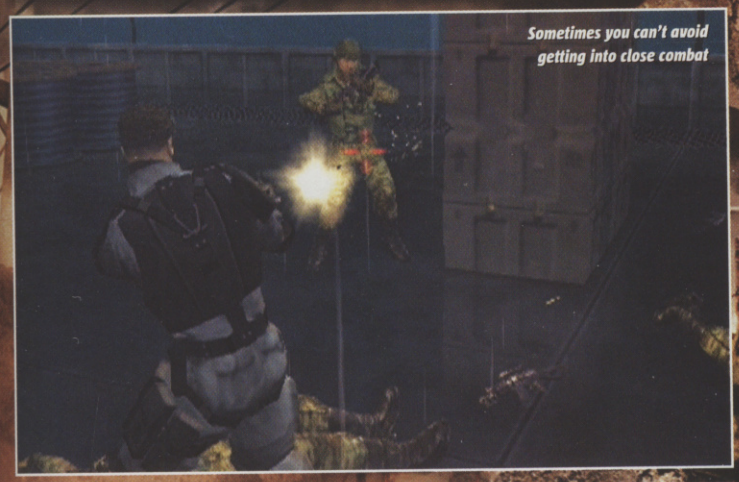
- Dripping with deathly dark atmosphere
- Combat is deep and satisfying
- Enemies are varied and huge

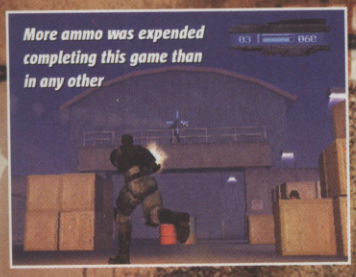
- Platforming is feeble and frustrating
- Mass slaughter can get tedious
- Not as clever as past instalments

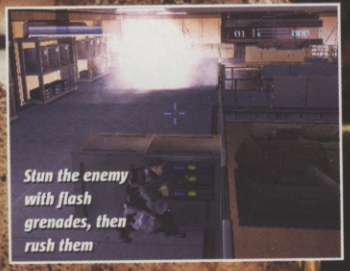
8 OUT OF TEN

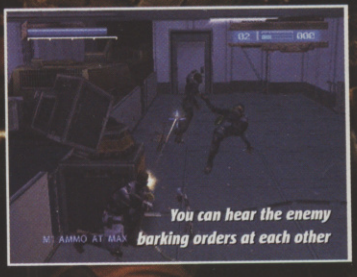
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Devil May Cry 2 (PS2), Prince of Persia (PS2)

KILL.SWITCH


Sometimes you can't avoid getting into close combat


More ammo was expended completing this game than in any other

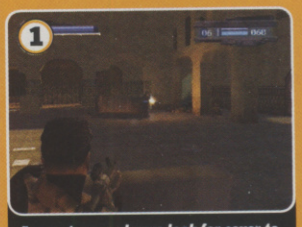

Stun the enemy with flash grenades, then rush them


You can hear the enemy barking orders at each other

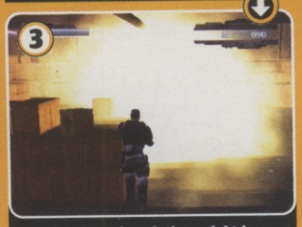
TRAINED TO KILL

Part of what makes Kill.Switch so cool is the way the enemy troops really make you work for your victories.

These guys are highly trained and will use cover and teamwork to the max.


Enemy troops always look for cover to fight from, just like real soldiers

If there's enough of them, they'll pin you down and get round your flanks


When you're pinned, they might bung over a pineapple

Chuck one back at them and they'll dive for cover – make your move now!

DUCK AND COVER

Run out all-guns-blazing and you'll be cut down like corn come harvest time.

You need to milk every wall, every box, every burnt out-car and every street corner for every ounce of cover it can offer.

Holding L1 lets you squeeze up to any kind of cover you can find

From here, you can blast away at your enemy from relative safety

Or if the incoming fire is too intense, poke your gun out and shoot blindly

Things can chug a bit when the action hots up

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: NAMCO DEV: NAMCO
WWW.KILLSWITCH.COM
REVIEWED ON: PS2
ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX

Q: WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF A STEALTH GAME? A: THIS IS

Blam! Blam! Blam! Budda-budda-budda!! This is, in words, what Kill.Switch sounds like. A non-stop volley of automatic gunfire, a venomous stream of tracer coming straight out of your TV, through your controller and – whack!– into your games membrane. Honestly, if stealth games were poisonous, this blaster would be the antidote.

You play a mysterious super-soldier sent on dangerous solo missions across the globe. Who you are working for, and why you are doing the things they tell you to is a mystery that only gets unravelled right at the end.

I KILL, YOU DIE

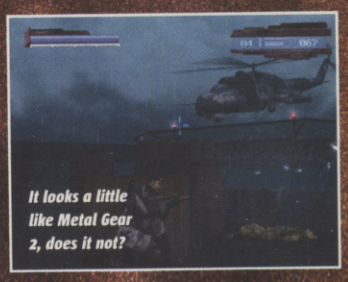
The action is all third-person, though you can stop and look down your gunsights for more accurate sniping. Both analogue sticks are used, letting you look in all directions easily, as you would in a first-person shooter.

It sounds standard, but Kill.Switch is a specialist game – it specialises in great big drawn-out firefights. One after the other, you'll be up against first pairs and trios of enemy troops, and then great big squads of highly-trained elite forces.

FLASH THEN DASH

But it's no out-and-out arcade shooter – you need to use tactics to survive. This is what characterises Kill.Switch. Constant cowering behind cover, waiting for the right moment to make your next move, whether it be to toss a flash grenade, blast the guy pinning you down from a distance or to make a dash to more cover.

There really isn't much more than that. No platforming (there's no jump button), no puzzle solving (things you need to find are lit up from miles away with glowing blue auras) and no exploring (only a fool could lose his way in these signposted levels). Just a hell of a lot of combat. Which for some will get a little tedious. But for others who are happy to escape the confines of many of today's team-based tactical stealth 'em ups, this will be like mana from a very, very violent heaven.


It looks a little like Metal Gear 2, does it not?

Games VERDICT

If it's pure, unadulterated action you're after, you're knocking on the right door. Every level is an intense workout for your combat skills. Just don't expect anything more than that. **Steve O**

- Endless, nail-biting firefights
- You have to be clever to survive
- Great graphics and sound

- Nothing else but shooting
- It's a fairly short experience
- No multiplayer to speak of

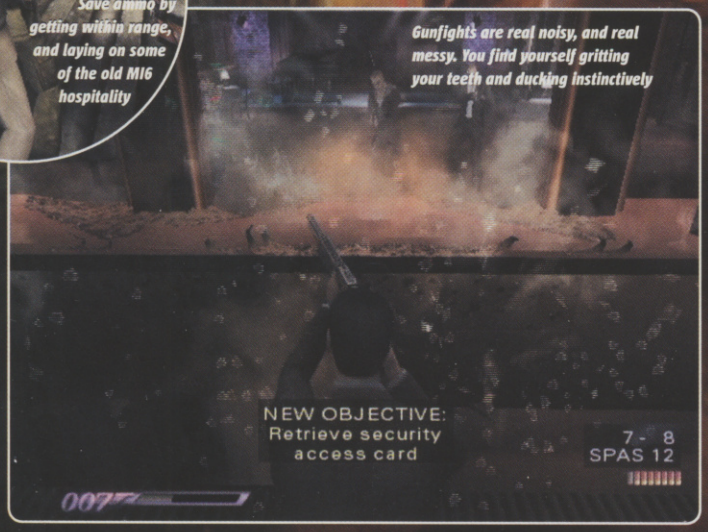
8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Warhammer 40,000: Fireworrior (PS2/Xb/GC)

007 EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

Hurtle down country lanes on a Triumph Daytona 600, and terrorise town centres in the Aston Martin V12 Vanquish

Save ammo by getting within range, and laying on some of the old MI6 hospitality



Gunfights are real noisy, and real messy. You find yourself gritting your teeth and ducking instinctively

GAME INFO | OUT: FEBRUARY 27 | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1-2 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS | DEV: ELECTRONIC ARTS | WWW.EAGAMES.COM | REVIEWED ON: PS2 | ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, GC, GBA

IT'S THE BEST BOND SINCE GOLDENEYE. NO, HONEST, IT REALLY BLIMMIN' IS

First off, we should thank EA for alerting us to the official Shannon Elizabeth website. In particular, a video called 'Tourist Girl, Part 2'. It's free to download, and you really should check this out.

Shannon Elizabeth is the latest Bond girl. Or rather, she's the first Bond girl to be famous for never actually appearing on screen – just her voice, and a reasonably drool-worthy computer graphic on Xbox, PS2, and GameCube. You see, Everything Or Nothing is not a licensed product of a Hollywood blockbuster, it's a first-of-its-kind chapter in the history of James Bond: a Hollywood-style videogame, in the way that only one of the world's largest publishers of games can provide.

From a certain point of view, this seems a shocking waste of a talent like Shannon. Again, we bring to your attention 'Tourist Girl, Part 2'. In the broad scheme of things, however: nice move, EA! Not because Shannon just bitch-slapped Chun-Li into the dinosaur age, but because EA also recruited several Hollywood megastars to complete the cast: Pierce Brosnan is 007, Willem Dafoe is Bond's arch-enemy Nikolai Diavolo, Judi Dench is M, John Cleese is Q the list goes on.

EA even brought onboard the scriptwriter of GoldenEye, Tomorrow Never Dies and The World Is Not Enough to ensure the authenticity of dialogue. So in the game, Bond doesn't only look like Brosnan in the movies, he delivers slick lines. Same for everyone with a starring role in the game – they look and sound the part.

By now, you can probably guess which side of the Everything Or Nothing fence EA was standing on when they started this. What's astonishing to CVG is that the beauty of it is more than skin deep.

AND WE DO MEAN ACTION

We've often stumbled out cinemas before, reliving awesome scenes, clinging onto that adrenaline rush. EON often comes close to delivering that same feeling. If we said the action is as hard-hitting as the best in Hollywood we'd be phonies, basically because the images are plainly not real. Even so, this is as full-blown action-packed as we think consoles can handle in 2004, and the variation in scenarios is arguably more adventurous than Hollywood has ever dared. A car chase involves fender-mounted chain-guns and rocket launchers. You find yourself exploding helicopters and armoured cars from the turret of a tank. Top of our list is a freefall off the edge of a cliff, where you must dodge bullets and rocky outcrops while in pursuit of a falling buddy on the way down.

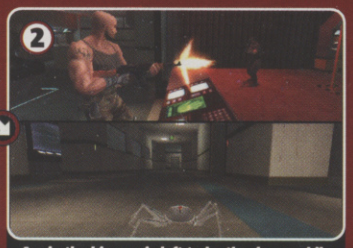
In last year's Nightfire we got an action-adventure with Bond elements

DOUBLE '00' AGENTS

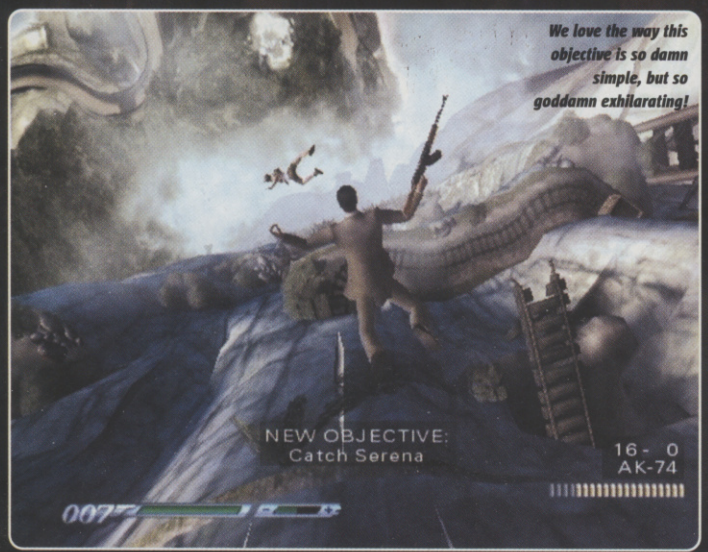
An additional dozen or so cleverly constructed multiplayer levels are included, playable with a choice of four characters. Levels are mostly geared for two-player missions, split between stealth-based or guns a-blazin' tactics.

All the gadgets from the one-player game are useable and you'll need to share resources such as ammo to make it through. EA tells us that there's an unlockable four-player deathmatch arena too.

While your team-mate draws the fire, send the Q Spider in search of alternate routes

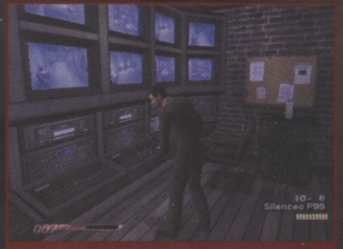


Again the big guy is left to be the decoy while Player Two heats things up a little



We love the way this objective is so damn simple, but so goddamn exhilarating!

^ Use Bond Sense to see who's on your case
v Q's bonkers invisible suit is handy here...

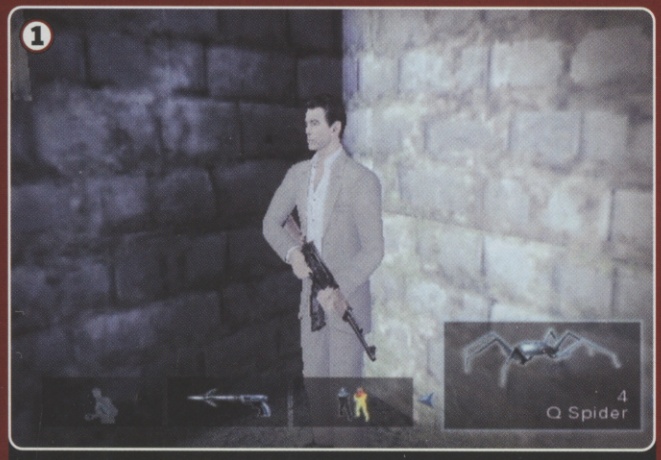


Some doors need more than a key to open. Here Bond breaks into the security room

MORE LIKELY TO BREAK

We really like the way missions are sometimes solved by one of Q's madcap inventions, instead of having to shoot everything in sight.

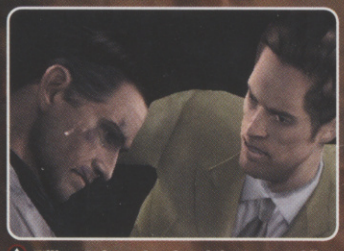
A radio-controlled buggy must cross a busy road to create a distraction in a warehouse, for example, and we're sure you'll love sneaking up behind guards with the explosive Q Spider.



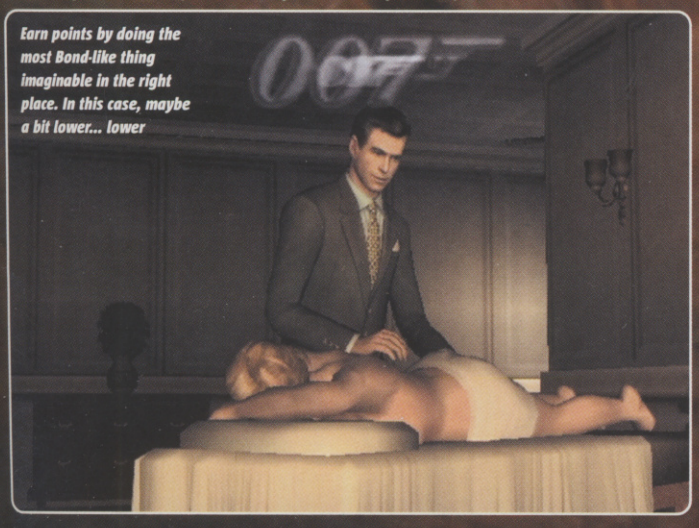
Select one of Q's gadget's from Bond's inventory - but he's still vulnerable in this position

This thing is about as big as a rat, and scurries in silence to help Bond spy or blow stuff up

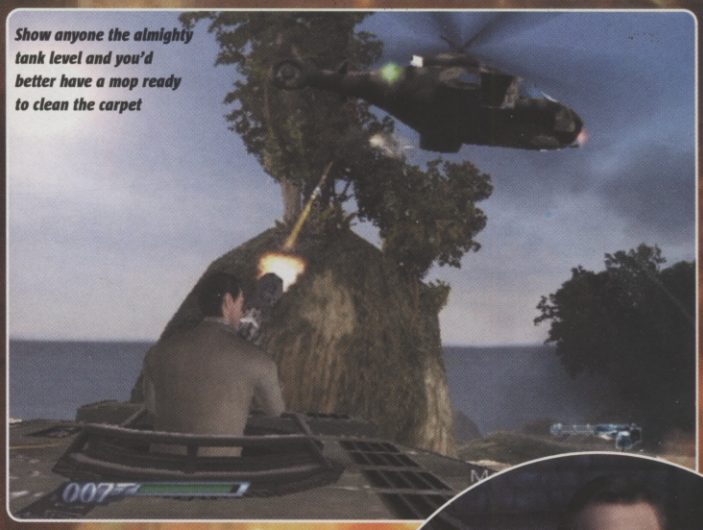
^ *Bond girl Serena St Germaine (Shannon Elizabeth of American Pie 2) is a real honey*



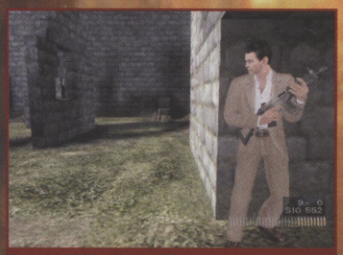
^ *Willem Dafoe, who played the Green Goblin in Spider-Man, is 007's nemesis Nikolai Diavolo*



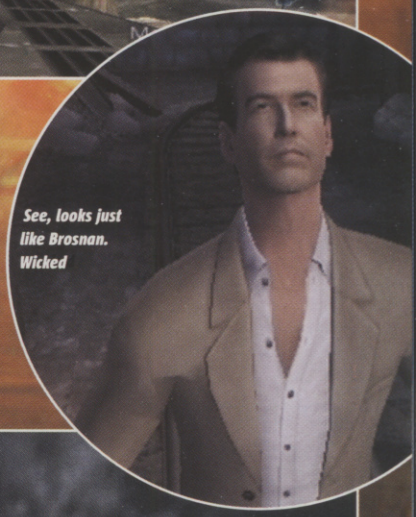
Earn points by doing the most Bond-like thing imaginable in the right place. In this case, maybe a bit lower... lower



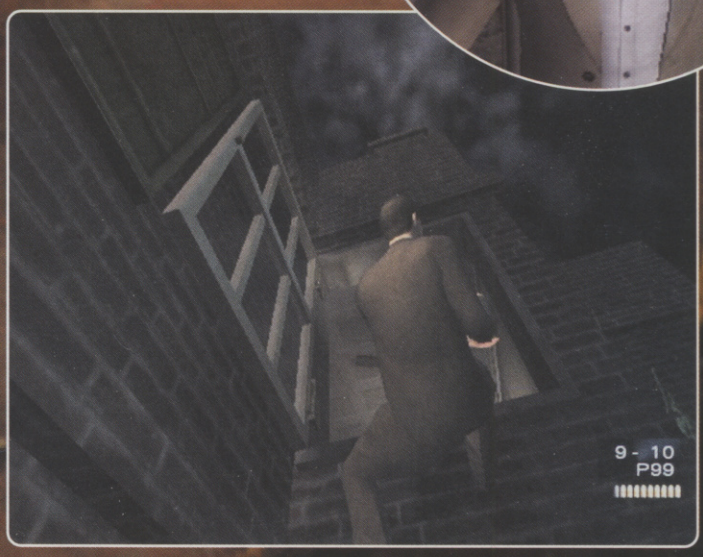
Show anyone the almighty tank level and you'd better have a mop ready to clean the carpet



Bond and enemy play peek-a-boo a few times before rushing out to shoot each other to shit



See, looks just like Brosnan. Wicked



attached. This time the attitude of Bond feels like it's part of the game's DNA, which has everything to do with style as much as it does explosions and other cool features.

ABSOLUT BOND

Initially you might cuss Bond for making a show of even simple things: you're sometimes required to think a few nanoseconds ahead before drawing your gun because Bond always likes to look good getting there. Still, when you get used to dealing 00-justice like a slick secret agent at the top of his game, you won't want it any other way.

Action is viewed third-person as opposed to first-person because a significant part of being Bond is performing for the audience. Likewise, enemies make a show of scurrying around, abseiling while shooting and ducking out of doorways – which transforms a routine into a memorable scene. In fact, every mission holds specific opportunities for a 'Bond Moment', whether it's exploding the floor from beneath an enemy's feet, dropping a lighting rig on some heads, speeding off a ramp with a motorbike, or even giving a massage! All this stuff means you need to be 00-cool in every situation. CVG

games VERDICT

The kind of game where you'll be on the phone for your mates to come round and see the next amazing scene. It's all very linear, but sometimes you have to realise this is a good thing. **Paul**

- Cinematic but feels great to play
- Real-life stars and production values
- Q-brand gadgetry is fun to fool around with
- Well worked multiplayer campaigns

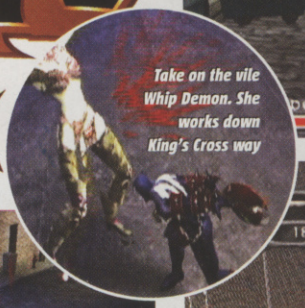
- You might feel slightly short-changed by how linear it all is...

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... James Bond 007: Nightfire PS2, XBOX, GC

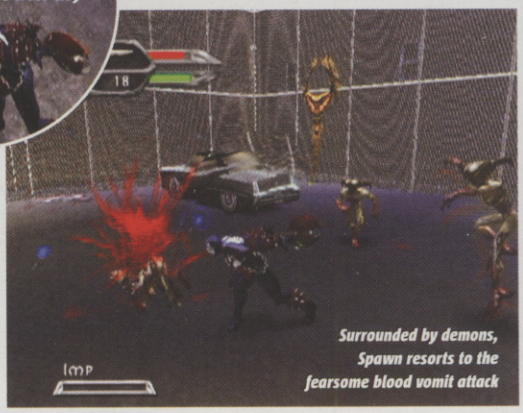
SPAWN ARMAGEDDON

Keep your distance or it's skewer time


Take on the vile Whip Demon. She works down King's Cross way

The jumping attack makes short but messy work of the Imps

Slicing Imps down the middle with an axe produces a wonderful amount of blood

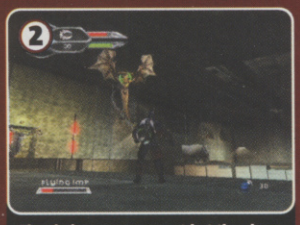

Surrounded by demons, Spawn resorts to the fearsome blood vomit attack

AN AXE TO GRIND

Weapons can be upgraded as you play through the game, so that you can lay waste to even the most powerful of demons in your path.

As well as a limb-shredding axe, Spawn has a range of other weapons to clear the world of foul demons, especially a few long-range numbers offering destruction from a safe distance. Boy will you be glad of these.

The shotgun is pretty powerful but takes time to reload


The chains never run out but they have a limited range, and look a little odd

The armour piercing pistols are rapid fire and powerful - we like

GAME INFO | OUT: MARCH 12 | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: EA | DEV: NAMCO | WWW.NAMCO.COM/GAMES/SPAWN | REVIEWED ON: XBOX | ALSO AVAILABLE: PS2 GC

DECAPITATE DEMONS IN SPRAYS OF FILTHY RED DEVIL BLOOD! YES!

Some comic book heroes never quite get what they deserve.

The Hulk surely deserved a decent film – didn't happen. Judge Dredd demanded a cracking game – no chance. Spawn got the biggest shaft of the lot though, in the form of a woeful movie starring John Leguizamo – the voice of Rayman's buddy Globox. Oh. Does the game do anything to redeem Spawn's cultish anti-hero status?

YOU SPAWNY GIT

Spawn looks and plays like Devil May Cry or Legacy of Kain: Defiance, or any other half-decent actioner come to think of it. Only with much of the fun sucked out.

Things start well enough; Spawn himself is equipped with the stacks of weapons fans of the comic would expect, and there are more than enough vile demons to slaughter. But that's about it. Things never really rise above the basic hack 'n' slash platforming fare that's been seen before – and seen a lot better.

Spawn can pull off a number of nifty moves ranging from hauling himself up buildings with chains shooting from his waist, to scaling walls with his razor-sharp claws. Thanks to the simple controls these moves are easy to master, but as there's little depth, the gameplay feels too simplistic. But at least it's easy to spill maximum demon blood in no time at all.

Blood 'n' guts is something Spawn has in spades. If you play the game on its hardest difficulty setting (which we recommend), you'll be surrounded by up to 10 demons at once, leaving you to massacre them amid a shower of gore and gristle.

CACKA COMBOS

As you progress through the game it's possible to increase the power of Spawn's weapons. But combos are pretty lame, and with only a couple of basic attacks, the action gets very repetitive.

This isn't a terrible game and, of course, if you're a fan of the comic you may well find enough here to amuse yourself. But with so many other quality titles around, it's hard to heartily recommend this trip to hell. CVG

Knock the Fire Demon down and it becomes a squishy pulsating mess...

CVG VERDICT

The lack of challenge and any real depth to the slashing and slicing makes this a title that, like its star, finds itself languishing in eternal purgatory. One for fans only, we reckon. **Paul A**

- ■ There are plenty of weapons for skull splitting
- ■ Simple controls are easy to master
- ■ A wet dream for fans of the comic

- ■ There's not much to do beyond hacking, slashing and jumping
- ■ It doesn't take too long to complete

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ Legacy of Kain: Defiance (PS2)

BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN

The little surprise up Capcom's sleeve for X7 is the Dual Hero System, which allows you to switch between sword-wielding Zero, who we've met before, and the new guy Axl (as in Rose!).

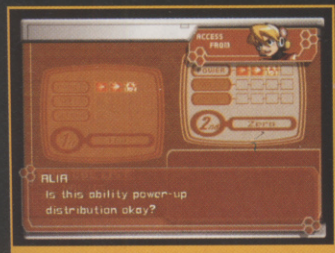
This guy totes a machine gun, but can also morph into various forms. Other characters can form tag-team partnerships as you recruit them throughout the adventure.

Axl can run while firing, letting Zero get up close...

...because at close quarters, Zero's sword is devastating

Tackle the stages in any order you want, based on the powers you'd like to acquire

While you're fighting for your life, keep an eye out for hostages. You won't regret it



Power cells from hostages you rescue can be used to enhance Zero and Axl's abilities

GAME INFO | OUT: MARCH 5 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: CAPCOM * DEV: CAPCOM * WWW.CAPCOM.COM/MEGAMAN | REVIEWED ON PS2

FIFTEEN YEARS DOWN THE LINE AND MEGAMAN'S STILL GOING STRONG

It's the 15th Anniversary for Megaman, and to celebrate Capcom is releasing another game. Shock! Okay, it's the first for PS2, but it's still Megaman, and it's the seventh in the X series, which is over 10 years old.

Like the metal bands that died out with the 80s but are back in again, Capcom's Megaman has remained cool to a loyal few, but could well be back for the attack this year. Hell, in Japan he's even called Rockman (though we're sure there's no connection). Anyway, for PS2 you could say the 'classic' MM formula needs a heavy reworking to rock alongside recent PS2 big hitters. While this hasn't exactly happened, it still does just enough.

80s REVIVAL

Capcom clearly had a blast updating Megaman for PS2. The improved technology is used to recreate classic ideas in slick new ways – check out the rotating tower, and the anti-gravity area, both typically 80s themes but soundly reworked. Of course, you have all the enemy types with their Achilles heels to exploit, and this idea is exaggerated to create cool bosses with cool names like Flame Heyenard, Snipe Anteator, Soldier Stonekong and – our favourite – Tornado Tonion, a robot onion! It's the old rock, paper, scissors and stone formula right the way through, but it never fails to keep you intrigued when handled this well.

Everything X7 delivers is quality, although with an unshakable sense of 'been there many times before'. If you've always loved the Megaman formula, and enjoyed the many updates through the years, you'll be satisfied but not much more. If you've always associated Megaman with old news, this is a good time to sample its time-honoured wares.

Boss battles in MM7 are typically inventive, in line with the great traditions of the series

There's even a driving section to keep you happy. Although this one made us sad

The old rotating tower trick, eh? Fall through the floor and you have to start again

Not only are you upside down on this level, the controls are also reversed

computer and video games VERDICT

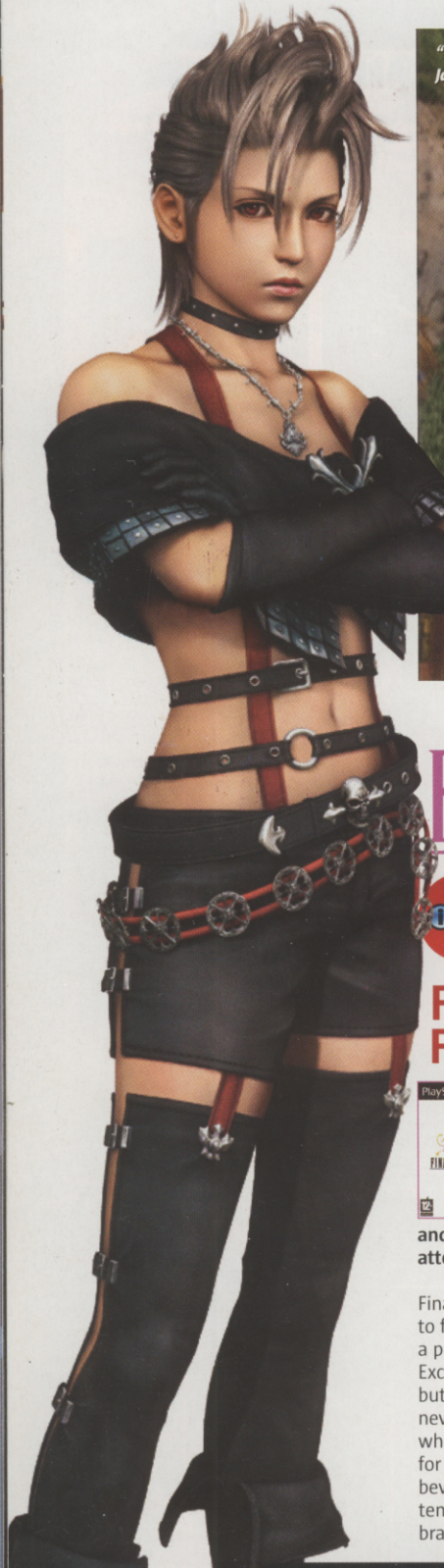
The variations on the Megaman theme may seem tired, but they are never boring. Everyone should own at least one Megaman game, and this ain't a bad one to begin with. **Paul**

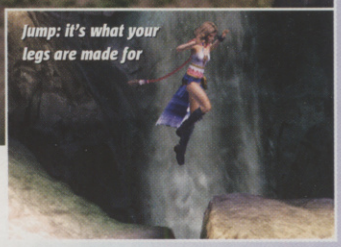
+
- Classic gameplay formula keeps on rockin'
- Exciting reworking of oldie, but goodie ideas
- We still dig this style of character

–
- Played one MM game, you've played 'em all
- A little unforgiving, which wears you down
- The themes are a little childish at times

7 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Megaman Anniversary Collection (PS2)





FINAL FANTASY X-2

GAME INFO

OUT: FEBRUARY 20 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

ONLINE GAMING

PUB: EA GAMES DEV: SQUARE ENIX
WWW.FFX2.COM

REVIEWED ON PS2

Dona was proud of her Agent Provocateur modelling contract

FIRST EVER SEQUEL TO A FINAL FANTASY STORY. AND IT'S GOT BABES

Norks, baps, great big dirty pillows. Whatever you call 'em, put breasts in a game and you'll attract our attention, for sure.

X-2 is the first Final Fantasy game to follow the plot of a previous game. Exciting news for fans, but what if you've never played FFX? That's where the boobies come in, for as well as killer RPG action, the bevy of scantily-clad women should tempt horny gamers. The game's got brand new additions too, such as jumping, climbing and a free-flowing mission structure to further lure in the newbies. But does it work?

Some of the game looks like a bad Britney video

BAD GIRLS

The window-dressing designed to make X-2 appeal to new players unfortunately makes for the worst bits of the game. The babes, while shapely, are never going to be stimulating (unless you've got a thing for blocky undergarments – in which case we recommend the lingerie department at Aldi), so the central trio of heroines (and similarly underdressed supporting cast) come across as a bit of a gimmick. And their perky music and girly dialogue is like a bad Britney video on repeat.

For the first time in Final Fantasy land, our heroines can also jump and climb. To compare them to Lara Croft, however, would be overstating the case somewhat. Hit circle when you get to a gap, if you can jump it (or climb it) you will. It's not used much. And that's a good thing.

The free-form mission structure at least makes up for some of this silliness. From the start, you're pretty much allowed to wander the map to your heart's content. Missions are graded by difficulty and marked as to whether they're a 'Hotspot' that will move the plot on, or not.

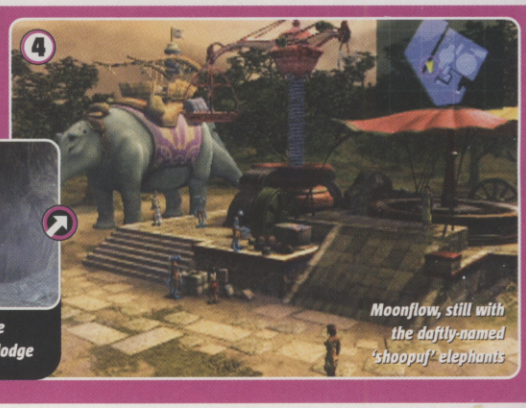
RECYCLE: IT'S GOOD FOR ECOLOGY!

We all know that Square Enix usually makes wholly original, lovingly crafted game worlds. But things are different with X-2. Why make a new game when you could re-use the last one's levels, says Square. Because it makes the game feel like a cheap expansion pack, that's why.

Back to Luca again. Only now you're not playing Blitzball

Kilika Island: To deal with the underdressed Dona. Yay!

Thunder Plains. This time there's no lightning to dodge



Moonflow, still with the daftly-named 'shoopuf' elephants

Go where you want: this game doesn't care

DRESSING UP GAMES

They say clothes maketh the man. And they've never been more right. Gone is the sphere grid system for upgrading your characters of FF X. Instead it's all about Dresspheres.

These are costumes you change mid-combat, each one activating a different set of skills.

Rikku is currently dressed as a gun mage. But not for long...

She's going to change to a black mage mid-combat to access some different skills

Out goes the skimpy purple top (which is a shame)...

...in comes the floppy purple hat. It's like a Saturday morning at Top Shop

The transformation is complete. Time to kick some magical ass

No, this is not the review for Dead Or Alive Extreme Beach Volleyball

Gippal's one of the few male characters

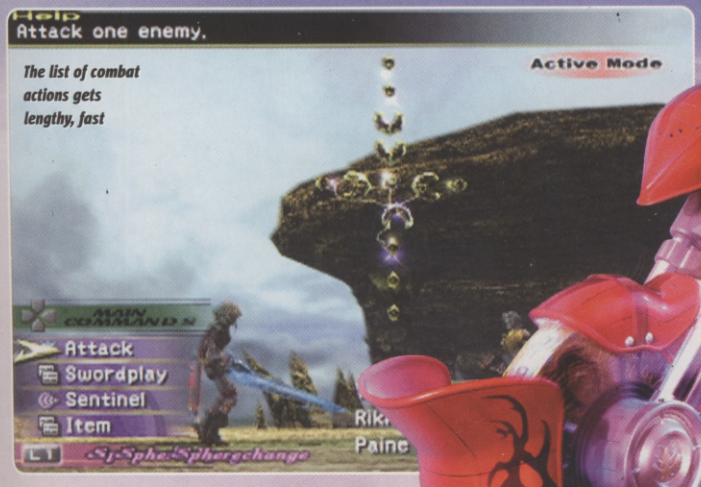
Final Fantasy meets Pop Idol

This means you can dip in and out of the game, which makes it feel like less of a slog than previous episodes (good). It also means that the plot is scattered throughout the missions, and you don't get that epic sweep of other Final Fantasy games (bad). But the fact you're forced to complete many of the side missions before the Hotspots appear undermines much of this new addition anyway.

FIGHTING FIT

Criticisms of the new style aside, much of what Fantasy fans love so passionately remains. And the changes to the core gameplay are good ones. The Dressphere system for levelling-up works well. The combat's possibly the fastest and most tactical it's ever been – with co-ordinated and special attacks needing timed button presses to pull off. And, of course, the characters, graphics and cutscenes all have that beautiful Final Fantasy attention to detail.

In all, X-2 doesn't disappoint when you've dived nice and deep. But for the first few hours prepare to be annoyed by the pointless binty gloss that's only in there to try and attract casual gamers that wouldn't – and shouldn't – touch a Final Fantasy game with a bargepole anyway. CVG



The combat is more fast-paced

Dresspheres – gotta catch 'em all

Scan for enemy weak spots

Translation: "Ooh, suits you, sir"

computer and video games VERDICT

The inane window dressing – the babes, the jumping – are annoying. But dig beneath the surface and this has all the gameplay you'd expect of a Final Fantasy adventure. **Si**

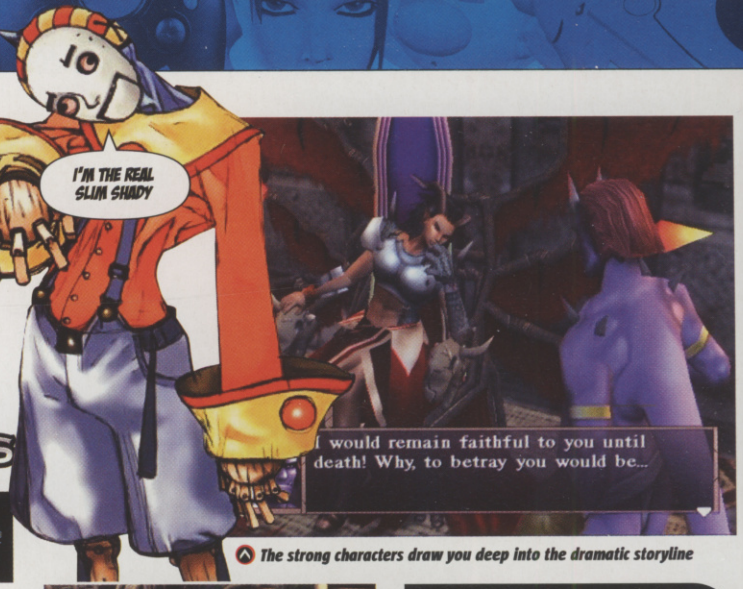
8 OUT OF TEN

- + Classic gameplay of series intact
- + Fast-paced combat is best ever
- + Looks as lovely as ever
- − Lack of a central, epic plot
- − Knocked-out, expansion pack feel
- − Climbing and jumping is redundant

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Final Fantasy X (PS2) ■ Arc (PS2)

Arc

TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS



The strong characters draw you deep into the dramatic storyline

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: SCEE DEV: CATTLE CALL
WWW.PLAYSTATION.COM
REVIEWED ON PS2

A DEMONIC SIBLING RIVALRY LEADS TO ROLE-PLAYING BLISS

Thinking. Usually a good thing, but not always. Recent RPG releases such as Unlimited Saga and Breath of Fire V have tied themselves in complicated knots trying to come up with a new approach to the format, yet have failed to tickle the public's fancy.

Now here comes Arc: Twilight of the Spirits, sauntering along the street, whistling, chillin', letting it all flow, and getting it spot-on. By distilling the pure essence of RPG gameplay, cutting it with some (occasionally) lush graphics, cool characters, a gripping plot and even some social commentary, you end up with a heartwarmingly retro yet surprisingly sophisticated RPG epic.

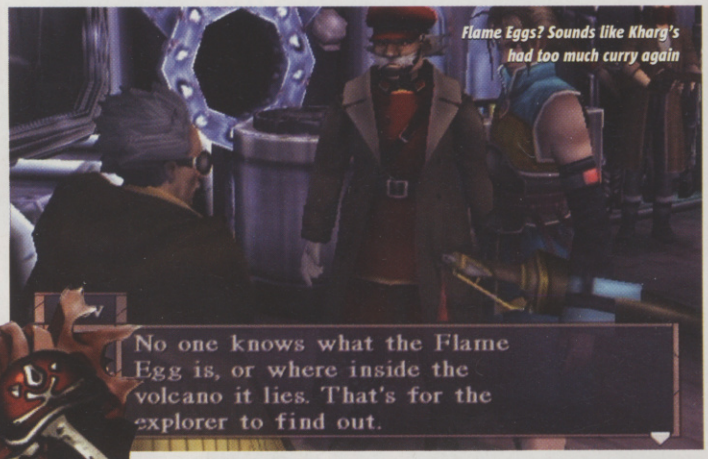
MY BROTHER'S A DEIMOS

The tale stars two brothers separated by tragedy, one human (Kharg) and one half-demon, or Deimos, (Darc). You experience their individual adventures in huge alternating chunks. At the start, the brothers are literally worlds apart, but fate draws them towards each other, despite each having sworn to annihilate the other's race. Darc's life seems relentlessly brutish. His fighting style is savage, and the people he talks to are more likely to be sarcastic, double-crossing fiends. Unsurprisingly, he often fights alone. Kharg has more friends, people happily chat to him and he usually has more allies in battle.

Deimos or human, if traditional role-playing games rock your world, Arc will draw you in and hold you spellbound. The gameplay basics may adhere unashamedly to the tried-and-trusted RPG formula of exploring, talking, levelling up and shopping, but if it works, why change it just to be clever? Why? WHY!!?? CVG

Final Fantasy fans will feel at home

Some locations feature battle arenas where you can enter tournaments and unlock secret characters



Flame Eggs? Sounds like Kharg's had too much curry again

Lilia is a mysterious and beautiful woman, rescued by Kharg and imprisoned by Darc

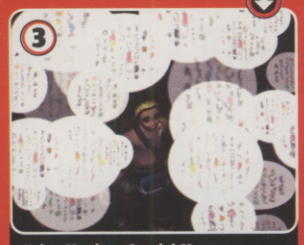
PINCER MOVEMENT

Arc is chock full of fast-paced, exciting battles. Mercifully, the controls are intuitive and easy to learn.

There's plenty of scope for tactics in the turn-based play. Move in tight to physically attack your opponents, or hang back and unleash Magic (Deimos) or Special Moves (Humans).

Your characters can move anywhere within the blue circle

The more battles you win, the stronger your physical attacks become



Using Magic or Special Moves consumes precious Spirit Stones

A disembodied old crone that spits poison? Not our idea of a good time

GAMES VERDICT

Simple, but far from dumb, Arc's purity evokes classic RPGs of the past, spicing up the retro vibe with bold visuals and effortless controls. RPG nuts should grab this with both hands. **Maura**

- Plot so deep you could swim in it
- Inventive, quirky characters
- Full of surprises – it keeps you guessing

- Too much text-based dialogue
- 'Old-fashioned' RPG playing
- No fast-forward through long cutscenes

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Final Fantasy X-2 (PS2), FF Tactics (GBA)

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

You can man the enemy's fixed machine gun posts for extra firepower

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

All the way through Armed And Dangerous, the designers have had their foot on the entertainment pedal.

Whether it's the comedy cut-scenes, the no-fuss missions, or the bizarre weaponry – everything is designed to deliver smiles.

The famous Land Shark Launcher does its business

Cute little squirrels carry high explosive barrels

The World's Smallest Black Hole creates a handy vortex

Your wise-cracking buddies may make you laugh

GAME INFO

OUT: FEBRUARY 20 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

ONLINE GAMING

PUB: LUCASARTS DEV: PLANET MOON STUDIOS
WWW.LUCASARTS.COM/PRODUCTS/ARMEDANDDANGEROUS

REVIEWED ON: PC CD ROM

ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX

The primitive jet pack adds a whole extra dimension to later levels

WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU CROSS HEAVY WEAPONRY WITH LIGHT HUMOUR

A posh English tea-loving battle droid, a Scottish ex-miner mole-man, and a Cockney hard-nut maybe aren't your typical space-age mercenaries. But then Armed And Dangerous isn't your typical space-age third-person shooter.

With guns that launch enormous sharks at your enemies, bombs which create mini black holes to suck in bad guys, and missions that involve rescuing a booby-trapped sacred sheep, you get the idea that A&D doesn't take itself too seriously. In fact, it's tongue is so firmly in its cheek that it's burst through, leaving a suppurating facial wound. Bloop!

ROMAN'S EMPIRE

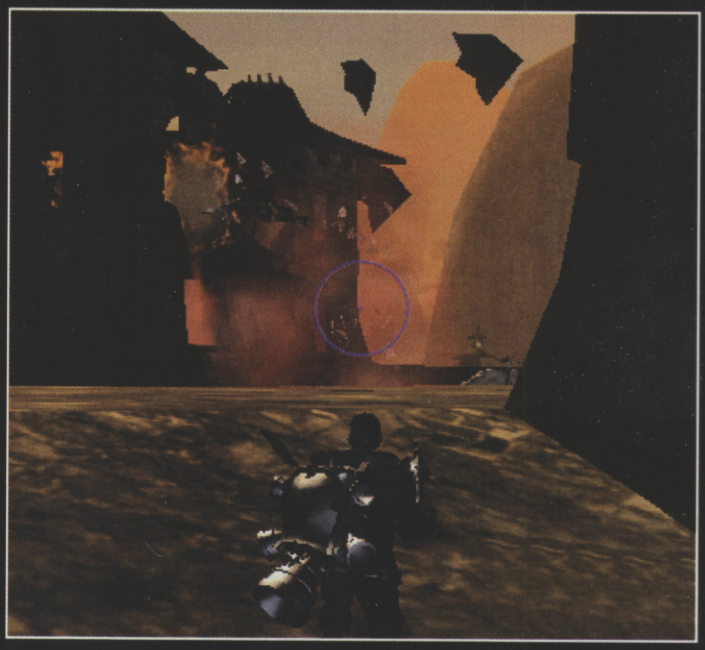
As Roman, the Cockney leader of the Lionhearts – a group of thieves turned guns-for-hire on the planet Minola – you've got to lead your trio of mercenary misfits to overthrow the evil King Forge. What this means is a succession of nice-looking and blisteringly action-packed levels crammed full of Grunts (the King's half-man half-beast soldiers), battle droids and gun towers to overcome. Using machine guns, rifles, rocket launchers and a whole host of other bizarre weaponry, your reactions and your sturdy trigger finger will be sorely tested. All of which mayhem is accompanied by a non-stop stream of quips, moans and assorted japes from your two ill-suited side-kicks.

FUNNY BONES

While the game's gags do occasionally crack you up, for most of the time you're so intent on staying alive under the furious onslaughts thrown at you that you don't really notice them. Which isn't a problem, as the action is entertaining enough in its own right to keep you interested.

Though you fight alongside your buddies, they are really there for comedy value, so this is pretty much a straight-out solo blaster with nothing in the way of puzzles or platforming to distract you. Occasional missions where you fight off invading armies from a heavy machine gun turret, or have to return kidnapped peasants to their homes add a little variation. Trouble is, anyone half-decent will cream the whole thing in a day, and there's no multiplayer.

So while it's a lot of fun while it lasts, it's no classic.



Loads of what you see can be destroyed; trees, buildings – the lot

Some of the levels look a treat, such as this industrial wasteland

Fighting some of the bigger enemies like this battle droid can be a challenge

Every level features a pub where you can go to stock up on ammo and extra weapons

GAMES VERDICT

Even if you don't like the comedy that comes with the carnage, A&D is a still a furious blast. Plenty of guns, plenty of ammo and plenty of enemies make a shooter that's more than a joke. **Steve O**

- Full-on action
- Emphasis is on fun
- Nice looking visuals

- Too short by far
- Not much variation
- The humour is an acquired taste, maybe

7 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Kill.Switch (PS2, XBOX) MDK 2 (PC)

Unreal TOURNAMENT 2004

Of the handful of new weapons, the AVRiL is the most destructive

Dogfights are common in the skies over every Conquest map

The old game modes have hardly changed, but they're still a lot of fun.

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £34.99 | PLAYERS: 1-32 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: ATARI | DEV EPIC/DIGITAL EXTREMES | WWW.UNREAL.COM | REVIEWED ON: PC CD ROM

TIME AGAIN TO WHEEL OUT THE KING OF MULTIPLAYER FPS ACTION

Last year's insanely fast, gorgeous to look at, violent and ceaselessly customisable Unreal Tournament 2003 offered the perfect deathmatch environment. The controls were slick and responsive, the weapons took in everything from the mundane to the spectacular, deaths were gloriously crimson, and the maps were as varied to look at as they were to explore. Save for adding a few more levels to the existing gameplay modes, there really wasn't much Epic could have done to improve the formula for a sequel.

But new levels hardly justifies releasing a new game – despite the fact that the map count in UT2004 is almost doubled from last year's effort – so Epic have re-instated Assault

Both the backgrounds and the characters look awesome

"AND HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO DIE, SIR?"

The five gameplay modes from 2003 are back, plus three that were released via last year's free Bonus Pack add-ons. But by far the best are the two new modes; Assault and Conquest.

Deathmatch used to be so popular. Oh well, at least the view is nice

DEATHMATCH

It's the bog-standard free-for-all we all know and love. Loads of extra new maps to try out here but essentially it's business as usual.

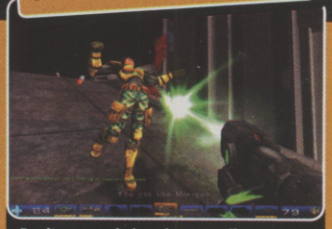
CAPTURE THE FLAG

Two teams face off, and the aim is to steal the enemy banner and bring it home while making sure yours stays back at base. Great fun.

Some of the new CTF maps are beautiful

LAST MAN STANDING

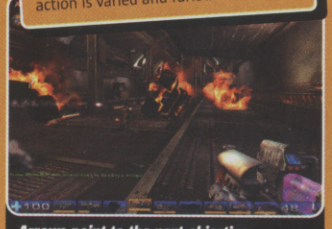
Like deathmatch only with three lives apiece. Last man, woman or robot standing gets to act smug for the rest of the day.



Don't worry, she's only pretending

ASSAULT

One team attacks, the other defends. From Mad Max-style desert convoys through space-bound attacks, the action is varied and furious.



Arrows point to the next objective

CONQUEST

The big one. Secure a chain of Power Nodes in order to destroy the enemy base. Use vehicles, gun positions or infantry tactics. Immense fun.

Control all the Power Nodes to win

MOTHER LOVER

Crazy at it may sound, Unreal Tournament features space ships (ones that fly in space, no less) and an Assault level that puts the Death Star attack in Return Of The Jedi to shame.

Humans begin in starfighters, attacking the Skaarj mothership

The Skaarj have ships of their own, plus plasma towers

Once shields are down the humans land to proceed on foot

The Skaarj put up a brave but ultimately futile defence

Covering fire from static gun emplacements always comes in useful

It's not so much the vehicles themselves that make Conquest so uniquely enjoyable, but their abilities. For example, we have what would appear to be a standard issue recon buggy, called a Scorpion, which is fast and as flimsy as you'd expect. What makes it such a laugh isn't just the way it bounds across the map, but the fact it's got retractable blades that can mow down enemy infantry. Pretty much each vehicle has something about it that makes it stand out from similar craft in other games.

FUN WITH A GUN

Most important of all is the way Epic has ensured UT2004 remains simple and fun. Even controlling the game's aircraft is uncomplicated thanks to the common use of standard FPS controls. You might imagine that on the larger levels those poor players pegging about on foot would get frustrated at having to trudge miles to get to the action, yet this is rarely the case. There are tons of vehicles and teleporters about the place, and in any case the enemy is rarely more than a few seconds away.

Of course, if it's a stifling level of realism you're after then you're stuffed here. UT was, is and always will be about straight-forward butt-kicking action. And this year's edition is by far the most fun and easily the most expansive and rewarding in the series so far. Which means PC first-person fans of any persuasion should feel duty-bound to buy it.

mode (a favourite from the 1999 original) and created an entirely new game called Conquest. And both of which are so cleverly designed and superbly executed that not only do they justify the full-whack asking price, but we can guarantee that after you've tried them you'll probably never want to capture a flag or play deathmatch again.

COMMAND AND CONQUEST

UT2004's ultimate new addition is its new fleet of vehicles, most of which are available to use exclusively across the game's vast Conquest levels where the aim is to destroy the enemy's Power Core before he destroys yours.

The bots in Unreal are still the best around

Hoorah, the sniper rifle is back in the game

I GOT YOU UNDER MY WHEELS

Unreal Tournament may not boast the largest fleet of drivable vehicles, but in terms of ease of use and functionality, these beauties more than do the trick. And in the mammoth Leviathan tank, UT certainly has one of the biggest and most destructive vehicles we've ever seen: four Plasma gun turrets and an inexhaustible rocket launcher – and that's for starters.

The Manta is the ultimate hairdryer. In fact, if you time your jumps right you can mince enemy soldiers in your giant fans

The Hellbender mounts a side cannon whose shots can be chain detonated to decimate enemy soldiers

Leviathan: Boom boom, you will shake the room. And the house. And the planet

Computer and Video Games VERDICT

For online first-person action the PC is still best. Whether it's straight deathmatch or team-based vehicular mayhem, multiplayer PC action games don't get much better. **Richie**

- The best action game graphics anywhere
- New Conquest and Assault modes rock
- Fun new vehicles with unique abilities

- Nice bots, but UT2004's not for solo play
- The garish colours and brash voice-overs are enough to get on your nerves

9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ Quake III Arena (PC/PS2), ■ Counter-Strike (Xbox)

PUYO POP FEVER

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW COST: £19.99 PLAYERS: 1-2 | PUB: SEGA DEV: SONIC TEAM | WWW.SONICTEAM.COM/PUYOFEVER

BATTLING JELLY BLOBS SAVE THE DAY

I drew the short straw this month; I got the goddam puzzle game to review. Nobody ever reads the puzzle game reviews, and that's one reason it got a tasty score – to lure you suckers in. The other reason is the game totally deserves it.

Puyo Pop is so cute there ought to be laws against it, and we know that. Also, if you've been reading CVG for years you'll have noticed so many 'Puyo' games that even Sesame Street's Count gave up keeping track.

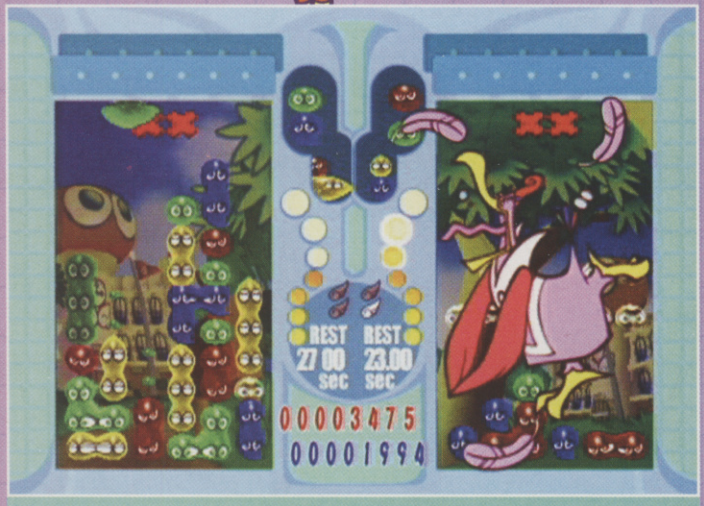
Most of these versions are basically ports of the basic original that caused all the fuss in the first place. We never waste time talking about those. Puyo Pop, on the other hand, is a genuine advance and well worth talking about.

FEVER TO TELL

The rules are thus: blobs of jelly fall down the screen in groups of two, three or four. Match up a same-coloured group of three or more and they vanish – unsurprisingly – with a 'pop'. Making blobs disappear in a multiplayer game results in ghost blobs appearing on your opponent's screen. Before ghost blobs tumble down, they sit at the top of the screen for a turn, buying time for him to get rid of more coloured blobs to scare the ghost ones away.

The development in Puyo Pop is that, in addition to being obstacles, the ghosts are an opportunity to turn the game to your advantage – prevent them from falling and you notch one up on the Fever meter. A full meter triggers the new Fever mode, giving you access to set-piece combo moves that really pile on the hurt for the poor other guy.

Only the gaming gods of this world can survive a high-level Puyo Pop showdown. Which is a better reason to own it than '...and your girlfriend will love it'. So for a fun, challenging alternative, give this a look.

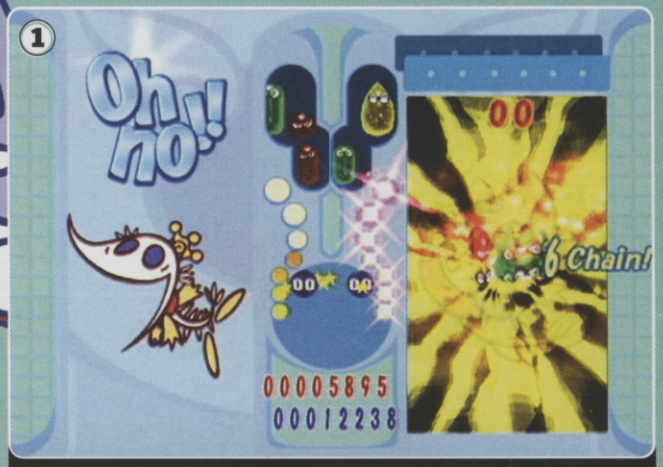


The more damage you inflict, the crazier the antics of the victim when you beat them

RACK 'EM UP, STACK 'EM UP

While Fever mode hangs in the balance, both sides fighting to keep ghost blobs at bay, you can go for the traditional Puyo Chain combos.

The trick is to know how a blobby sandwich is made. Stop your filthy minds and read on...



Chain combos climb as high as 20 (or maybe even higher, for all we know!) . We dream of making combos like that. That and of holidays in the sun

You can see here that player one (stage left) is trying to line up blobs to make a main chain combo. But player two has other ideas – three of them

Daffy characters ahoy! Hoist the main sail for the land of frog-like acorns and Onion pixies

When your Fever meter is stoked, Fever mode comes rushing to your rescue

Take that you stupid pink chicken sucka!

GAMES VERDICT

You may have played Puyo Puyo before, but the Fever mode really makes a difference. Fans may even end up wondering how they ever enjoyed playing without it, in fact. **Paul**

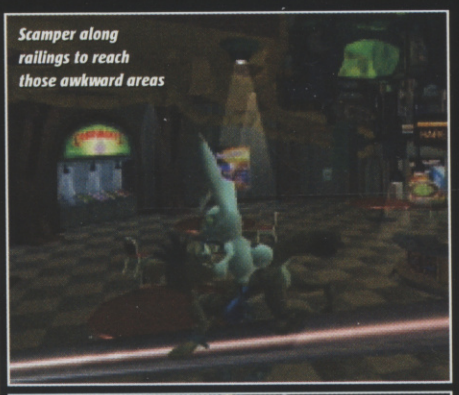
- New Fever mode raises the stakes
- You'll never get bored of playing
- Even the one-player game is compelling

- Music direct from the arse of hell
- Cute characters could induce vomiting
- Still won't cut it if you simply hate puzzlers

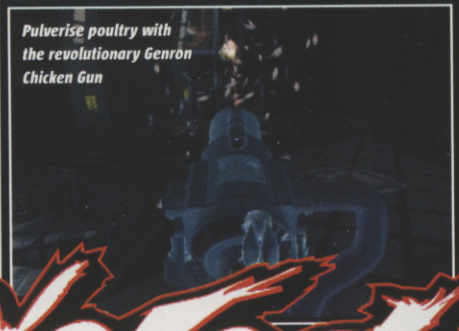
7 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Made In Wario (GC) Tetris Worlds (Xbox)

Avenge your furry friends by smashing up Genron property


Scamper along railings to reach those awkward areas

Swing Redmond around your head to keep momentarily aloft


Pulverise poultry with the revolutionary Genron Chicken Gun

Whiplash

DEATH AND DISSECTION AS RABID RODENT DUO STORM THE PS2

GAME INFO OUT: FEBRUARY 27 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: EIDOS • DEV: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
WWW.WHIPLASH-GAME.COM
REVIEWED ON PS2

H & Claire, Marmite and peanut butter, the contents of Lara Croft's sports bra – the world is full of improbable and inseparable double-acts. While some are a heaving cataclysm of disaster and disappointment, others are a buxom success.

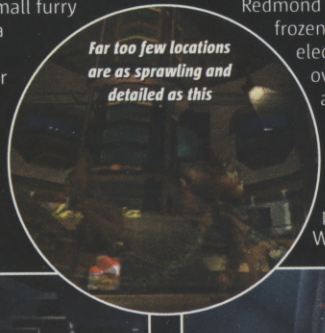
Step up Redmond the rabbit and Spanx the weasel – small furry balls of psychosis on a mission for freedom. After an eleventh hour escape from the clutches of an animal research laboratory, the unlikely duo must traverse the myriad platforming obstacles awaiting them in the depths of the evil Genron Corporation's compound.

TILL DEATH DO US PART

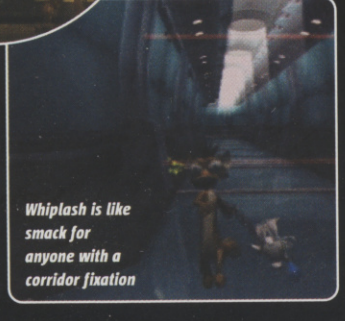
Chained at the hip, the feral pair are forced to work in tandem throughout their quest, freeing fellow animal inmates and smashing up company property in the name of righteous retribution. Controlling Spanx, you'll do all the nifty footwork while Redmond is pummelled, fried, frozen, inflated and electrified in a bid to overcome the puzzles and enemies lurking ahead.

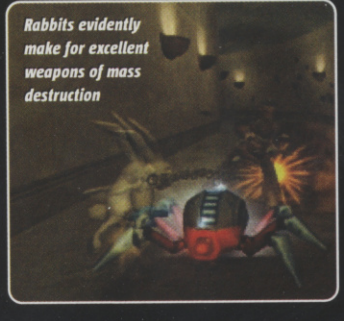
The gleefully sadistic humour and pitch-perfect presentation make Whiplash an absolute blast to witness – the tongue-in-cheek corporate announcements that punctuate most areas and the spot-on animation of the leads are enough to moisten even the most durable incontinence pants.

It's a pity, then, that while the mission-based structure and flagrant rabbit abuse provide some nicely diverse arcade action, the uninspired level design and stale, shallow gameplay mechanics fail to raise Whiplash above the flock of other generic platformers out there. Throw in the merely serviceable graphics and infuriating loading times, and you're left with a title that's got everything going for it except the game itself.


Far too few locations are as sprawling and detailed as this

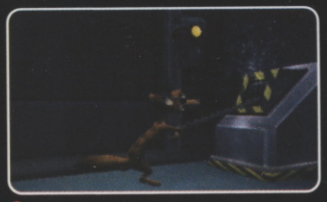
Swing across gaping chasms thanks to your high voltage bunny friend

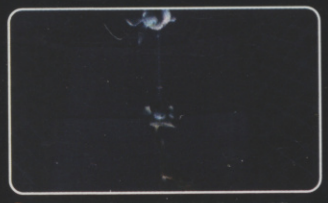

Whiplash is like smack for anyone with a corridor fixation


Rabbits evidently make for excellent weapons of mass destruction

BUNNY BOILER

If you want to get out of the place alive, you're going to have, uh, 'experiment' a little with Redmond the rabbit. Normally, we wouldn't condone shoving fifty thousand volts up a furry critter's bum but, hey, it's all in a good cause!


Bust open doors by slinging Redmond into the gears


Pump your bunny full of helium and float to high-up areas

A chocolate rabbit provides a tasty distraction for pesky security guards

CVG GAMES VERDICT

It's almost worth giving a whirl just for the utter insanity of it all, but the disappointing game underneath means you'll probably be nodding off when you aren't wetting your knickers. **Matt W**

+ Hilariously mean-spirited humour
+ Spot-on animation and voice work
+ Animal cruelty has never been so much fun

− Too many bland, repetitive areas to endure
− Little variation in the bad guys
− 'Chain' gimmick isn't as cool as it thinks it is

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Ratchet & Clank2 (PS2) Jak II (PS2)

DEUS EX INVISIBLE WAR

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £39.99 (34.99 PC) | PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: EIDOS | DEV: ION STORM | WWW.DEUSEX.COM | REVIEWED ON: XBOX | ALSO AVAILABLE: PC

TRUST NO ONE! APART FROM US AND OUR DEFINITIVE REVIEW, OF COURSE...

You love games. You suffer for your passion. Blistered thumbs, claw hands, streaming eyes and beyond.

Anyone who plays hard will be familiar with these side effects. But the original Deus Ex introduced scary new by-products to trouble players. Try subconscious guilt tripping, and full-on paranoia for starters. Now with Invisible War you may need to break out the blue Smarties once again, as the sequel to one of the biggest mind-melts in gaming history is here.

TRUST NO ONE

Invisible War picks up from where the original game left off. The world has been changed via the efforts of our previous hero JC Denton, national governments have tumbled, their place taken by global mega corporations. One of which, as newcomer Alex D, you begin the game working for.

This being Deus Ex, it's pretty much up to you who you align yourself with during the course of events, and who, if anyone, you choose to believe in your first-person quest to uncover the truth. Tarsus, your starting employer, seems fairly harmless, yet the self-professed peaceful Order is trying to eliminate them and they don't seem to give a flying toss who gets in their way. Of course these aren't the only corporate players in the game – there are larger and more nefarious forces at work, each with its own secret agenda. Needless to say, if you like your fair share of mystery in your games, you've certainly come to the right place.

For those who simply want to spill blood and break things, Invisible War has got plenty to offer. As a first-person shooter, Deus Ex isn't quite in the same league as Halo, Medal Of Honor or Half-Life – the setting is rather bleak and the enemies significantly fewer in number – but the nod towards role-playing certainly adds variety and plenty of scope for replayability.

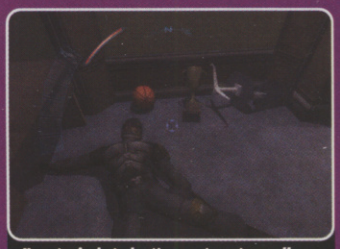
COIN-OP

Rather than collect and spend experience points however, Deus Ex's RPG coin is the Biomod, a nano-chip that neatly slots into various parts of

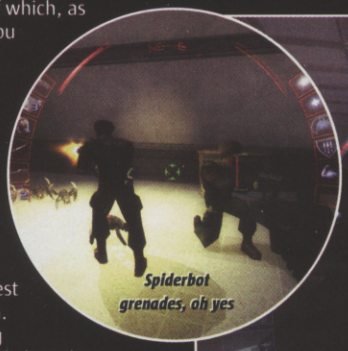
SICK MINDS

Being such a dark and rather sullen game, moments of cheeky cheerfulness are rarer than hen's teeth.

However, there are plenty of laughs to be had by picking stuff up and hurling it as far as you can. Dead bodies can be found in abundance, and with the strength biomod maxed out, you can bung these a *seriously* long way. Thanks to the rag-doll physics, they might land in amusing and impossible positions. Word of warning – the Xbox physics are not half as good as the PC version.

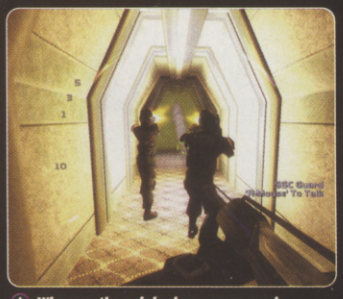


Your typical student's apartment, royally trashed in accordance with tradition



Spiderbot grenades, oh yes

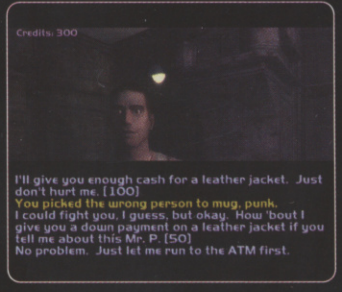
Supposedly it is possible to complete the game without killing anyone



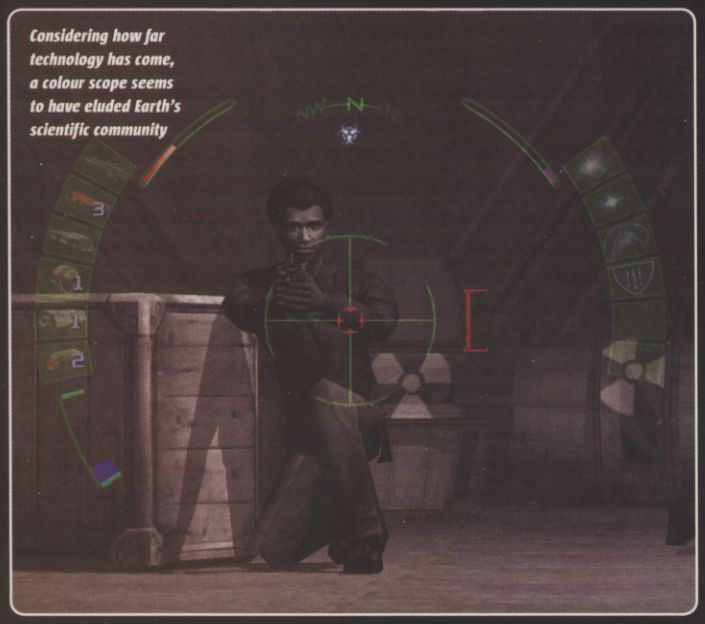
Whereas the original was very much an RPG, Invisible War is more an FPS

'Your trousers appear not to be fastened sir... if I may – just hold still'

Early on the choices you make are less important. Later they'll impact on the future of all humanity. Oh the pressure, the pressure



The game is riddled with deceitful conspiracy, dubious ethical motives and bubbles with homo-erotic tension



Considering how far technology has come, a colour scope seems to have eluded Earth's scientific community

TOUCHED BY MOD

Regular Biomod canisters are easily found, usually locked away in some cupboard or other. Black market Biomods are usually bought from scary looking people in dark, seedy corridors.

Both types (and there are a total of 15 to experiment with) must be installed into the proper slot, and there are mods for your arms, head, eyes, legs and skeleton.

Cloak is a cranial implant that renders you invisible to organic enemies. If you want to sneak past mechanical foes, you'll need a Thermal Masking mod instead

SPY DRONE

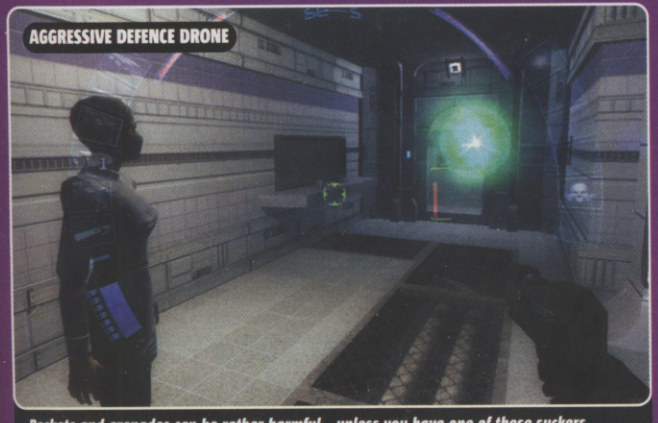
Spy Drone is a black market Eye enhancement that launches a small drone that acts like a remote camera. Use it to scout ahead. Think of it as the ultimate perving gadget.

It also fires EMP ammunition to take out robots and security cameras, although don't expect it to last long in a heavy firefight.

For those times when a health pack just won't do, this illegal biomod will happily attach itself to a nearby corpse or unconscious body and suck out its life force for you to absorb

STRENGTH

Easily inserted into the arm this simple augmentation gives you extra strength, allowing you to pick up heavy objects, throw objects further, carry more items in your inventory and wield melee weapons with greater force.



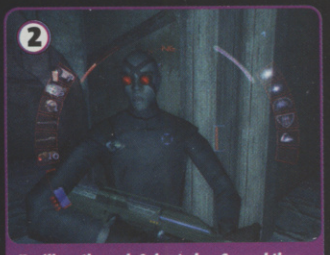
Rockets and grenades can be rather harmful... unless you have one of these suckers orbiting you that can detonate incoming explosives before they get within lethal range

PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO MEET

Sadly, while your careers' officer probably had the best of intentions when doling out advice, Tarsus isn't the safest employer in the market.

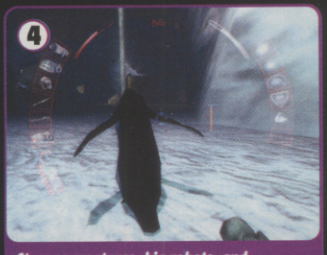
In fact, as the game begins a terrorist attack is underway on the Tarsus HQ in Chicago – an attack that will leave the city uninhabitable. Hastily moved to Seattle, the game's intricately layered missions take in the murky underbellies of Cairo, Germany, Antarctica and New York.

With its clubs, street life and other whacked-out characters, Seattle is fun

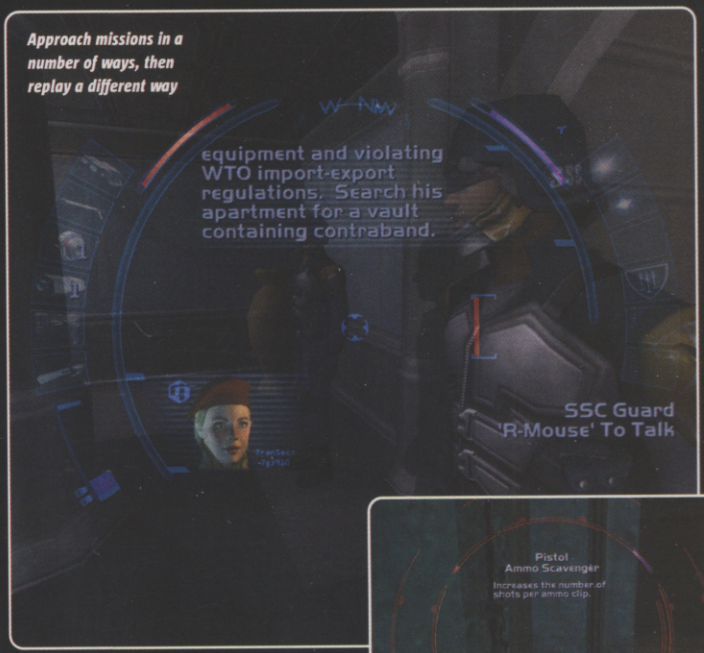


You'll go through Cairo twice. Second-time around, it seems everyone's out to get you

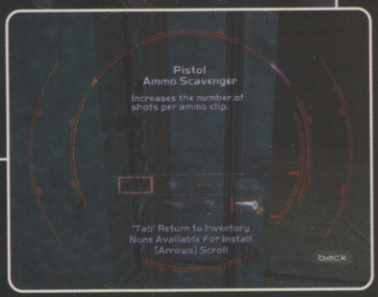
The pretty German town of Trier hides a big secret – and some incredible technology



Strange creatures, big robots, and penguins – things get weird in Antarctica



Approach missions in a number of ways, then replay a different way



Most weapons can be upgraded to include silencers, scopes and more

the body to augment your already super-human abilities.

Despite the oppressive mood of the graphics, Deus Ex isn't just a deeply atmospheric and grittily realistic game, but one that offers a storyline that works on many different levels, with missions that can be attempted in any order, and completed in any number of ways.

Sadly – and this is more true for PC fans – the game lacks the depth of character development that marked the original out as such an innovative classic. Even so, it looks great, gameplay is varied and smooth and you can be sure the experience will linger in the mind long after you've finished playing. CVG

games VERDICT

There are very few games that can claim to be as intelligent or as replayable as DX:IW. It's not as consuming as the PC original, but this is still a fantastic and stylish game. **Richie**

- Conspiracy-fuelled brain-scrambling story
- Graphics and hilarious body-crunching physics
- Deserves to be played again and again
- Lacks the RPG depth of the original
- Nitpicky PC players will hate the over-simplified interface

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Medal of Honor Rising Sun (PS2)

URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER

It's like football for people who don't like football games. What's the point in that?

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW COST: £29.99 PLAYERS: 1-4 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: ACCLAIM * DEV: SILICON DREAMS * WWW.URBANFREESTYLESOCCER.COM | REVIEWED ON: PS2 | ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, PC, CUBE

CAN I KICK IT? SURE, PREFERABLY OUT THE BLOODY WINDOW

First of all, just because Urban Freestyle Soccer has 'soccer' in the title, don't think this bears any relation to Pro Evo or FIFA. Okay, so it's still about kicking a footy into a goal, but Vanessa Feltz and Rachel Stevens are both female, but you wouldn't touch the Fat Camp gomper with your mate's lo-fat meat and two veg.

This is a totally different type of game. Think NBA and NFL Street with fewer Americans, and rules that don't exactly take a university degree to understand.

Games take place on scabby scraps of tarmac under motorway flyovers and in between ghetto hi-rises. Each team has four players, and goals are fashioned from scaffolding posts, garage doors and everyone's old school favourite – folded up jumpers.

YELLOW CARD

It's simple football, and a simple football game. The ball sticks to your trainers like stepped-in dog turd, and single button presses pass and shoot. The hook is the array of crazy tricks you can perform with the pigskin. Remember those Nike adverts in the cage with Edgar Davids and his mates pissing around? Like that.

Unfortunately, after you've seen these moves a few times, they've got about as much punch as diarrhoea in a paper bag. You know how cool it feels pulling off one of those over-the-head flicks in Pro Evo? It's cool because it takes skill and doesn't happen very often, but Urban Freestyle jams so many tricks down your throat they soon get boring.

RED CARD

Worse than that, Urban Freestyle isn't fun to play. There are only ten teams, the camera angles are atrocious and the frustratingly simple gameplay gets dull well before injury time.

And though it tries its hardest, UF is not cool. This is a perfect example of what patronising marketing executives reckon you like – that's why there's a team of skaters, a team of graffiti artists, a team of rappers from 'da hood' and so on. Hey, if they cover all their bases you must be able to relate to at least one stereotype, right?

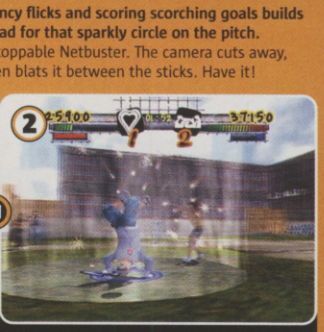
Don't be fooled. Urban Freestyle is hugely disappointing and the 'attitude' it offers is embarrassing. Kick it into touch. CVG

STINKER CVG STINKER

BACK OF THE NET!

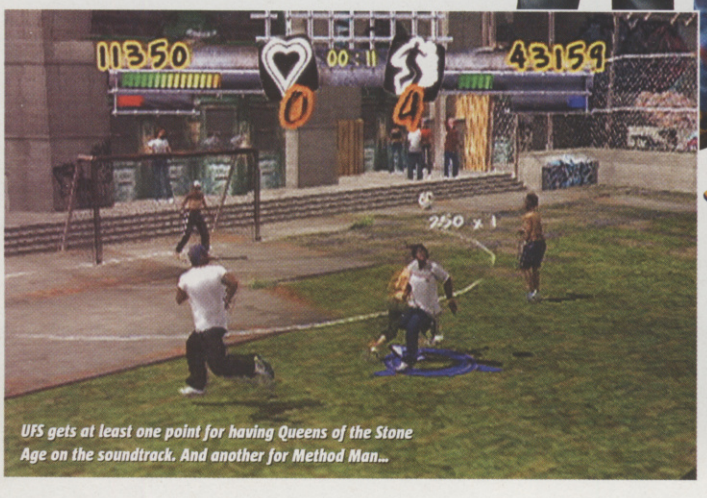
Linking inch-perfect passes, doing fancy flicks and scoring scorching goals builds up your Netbuster bar. Fill it up and head for that sparkly circle on the pitch. Do this and you can unleash a near-unstoppable Netbuster. The camera cuts away, your player does some funky keepie-ups, and then blats it between the sticks. Have it!

When your bar's full, sparkly areas appear on the pitch. Get inside and bust one out!



Your player does loads of daft tricks that'd get you a boot in the scrote down the park

And then thumps it into the net, leaving your opponents sprawling in the wake!



UFS gets at least one point for having Queens of the Stone Age on the soundtrack. And another for Method Man...

Jump off walls to avoid getting creamed

Your players say 'shit' a lot. How cool...

Some moves look sweet but get dull quickly

GAMES VERDICT

The football game equivalent of that guy with the newest strip, the most expensive shin pads and the flashiest boots who can't kick a ball for toffee. Urban football? Urban footbollocks. **Graeme**

+ Flashy moves like those off the Nike adverts
+ Soundtrack that manages to be quite cool

− Simple, repetitive, remedial gameplay
− Shocking camera angles
− Stereotypes that border on the offensive

3 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ Pro Evo 3 (PS2), ■ NFL Street (PS2, XB, GC)

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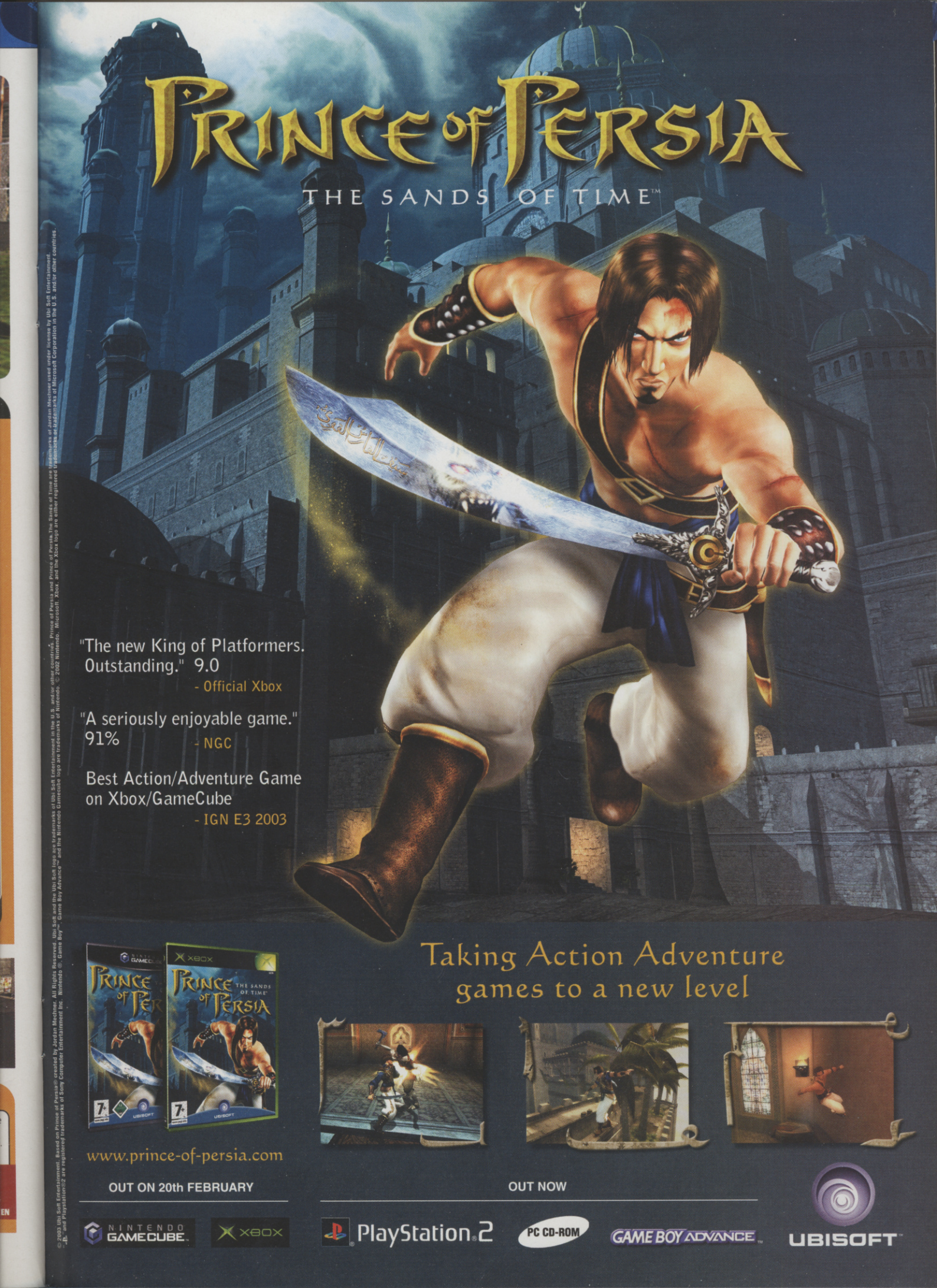

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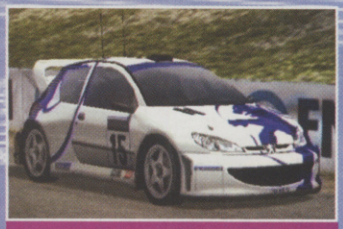
R:RACING

Monaco is the only course that looks halfway decent, but we've seen it all before



The car models look all right but move unconvincingly and float above the road

Pressure on your opponent fills their stress bar. Red means they're crapping themselves

Even your arch rival Gina can't withstand your mind games - she's spun off!

The dull replays don't live up to the standards of other racers

GAME INFO | OUT: MARCH 5 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-2 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS DEV: NAMCO | WWW.RACINGEVOLUTION.COM | REVIEWED ON: PS2 | ALSO AVAILABLE: GC XB

EVEN TWIN AIRBAGS CAN'T SAVE THIS GIRL RACER FROM BEING A WRITE-OFF

In a way R: Racing is like Hollyoaks – proof that filling something with fit birds and loads of boobs doesn't guarantee quality. Surprising, we know.

A shame, really, since R: Racing has a heritage built on the classic Ridge Racer series. It was never the most realistic racer, but it did have retina-searing speed and awesome handling that won Nobel Prizes for services to powerslides. R: Racing, erm, doesn't.

STUCK IN GEAR

The problem is that R:R tries to straddle the arcade fun of Ridge and the racing realism of Gran Turismo. While it features 35 officially licensed motors and five real-world race tracks, the handling is so detached from accurate physics that it'll confuse even the most hardcore driving game fan. Cars look weirdly detached from the road, switch between stubborn understeer and catastrophic oversteer with alarming regularity, and generally display all the handling characteristics of a soggy Wotsit. In a top-of the range racer like GT3 you know exactly how far you can push your machine. In R: Racing you might as well drive blindfolded.

PRE MENSTRUAL STRESS

R: Racing has souped itself up with two major features. The first is a storyline that sees you playing Rena, an ambulance driving hottie rising through the ranks of a corrupt racing team. It's so daft it's almost good, but it's far too short and displays about as much knowledge of the racing world as Michael Jackson has of appropriate child sleeping arrangements.

The second is a system that attempts to show the effects of stress on your opponents. Get into their slipstream, pile on the pressure and they'll crack up and spin out. Like the rest of the game, it's a ridiculous over-simplification of the mental stresses of racing and ends up a bit like that fat lassie winning Pop Idol – a nice idea but pretty crap in reality. CW

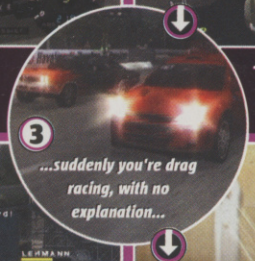
LIFESTYLES OF THE BITCH AND FAMOUS

Rena starts off as the fastest ambulance driver in town, and ends up the fastest race car driver in the world.

It's a story full of power, passion, pointless dialogue and ridiculous situations, but at least it's sprinkled with some eye-popping cleavage and a shower scene.

You start off running in a local amateur race to prove your ability...

...then have to get onto the team by skinning Chrysler Vipers in a retro Fiat...



...suddenly you're drag racing, with no explanation...

And then you're mixing it up in GT cars at Monaco! Based on a true story, yeah?

...Quick stop for a shower break. Pick up that soap will ya, love?

GamesTM VERDICT

All the pert puppies in the world couldn't bring this within sniffing distance of NFS: Underground. About as attractive as wheel clamps on your brand new Beamer. **Graeme**

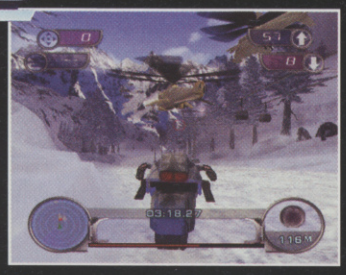
- ■ Well, you know, it does have titties
- ■ You should like it if you're a kiddie...
- ■ ...or if you hate racing games

- ■ Rotten handling and it's s-l-o-w
- ■ Looks mince compared to GT3 and Gotham
- ■ Stupid, pointless, overly-short storyline

4 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ TOCA Race Driver (PS2, XB, PC)

We like the way that the 4x4 leaves thick tyre marks in the mud and snow



The auto-lock targeting system can be frustratingly innacurate at times

The radar (bottom left) is a bit useless as attackers appear in a rear-view camera when near

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1-2 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: MIDWAY | DEV: ANGEL STUDIOS | WWW.MIDWAY.COM | REVIEWED ON: PS2 | ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, GC

IT'S A CAR! IT'S A BIKE! IT'S A BOAT! IT'S A BIT CACK!

If you caught last issue's Spy Hunter 2 preview, you'll have spied with your beady little eyes that our Excite Meter wasn't exactly spurting with dirty great globs of anticipation. Hell no.

This month we've spent hours behind the wheel, handlebars, and rudder of Midway's newest espionage arcade racer, but our gaming libido remains limper than a soggy HobNob.

OFF ROAD AND OFF THE MARK

Instead of shifting the action of the last game up a gear, Spy Hunter 2 slips into cruise control and takes you on a journey to places you've already been. It plays just like its 2001 predecessor, except for a smattering of lazy new trimmings slepped in there in an effort to pump up the fun factor.

The star of the show, the GT-8155 Interceptor, has undergone cosmetic surgery and been kitted out with a few new optional extras such as being able to turn into an off-roader. However, this addition is about as useful as an inflatable dartboard, because the terrain is rarely bumpy enough to trouble even a motorised wheelchair.

None of Spy Hunter 2's new features make it any more enjoyable than before. If anything, they're a joke. Take the new Multiplayer Campaign mode, for one example. One player gets to drive the car and do the fun stuff, while the other person controls a guff secondary weapon. It's a bit like the Warthog sections in Halo, but without the stunning scenery, vast freedom, excitement, originality... we could go on.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN A CONTENDER

It's a real shame that these new features are such pants, because the handling is on the money, and the action is furious when you're battling it out at speed with heaps of enemies. But as most of the missions are painfully linear and repetitive, any quality moments of vehicular mayhem are turned into a total write-off by the noggin-numbing boredom of such one-dimensional stages.

At the end of the day, Spy Hunter 2 feels like a step backwards for the series, and no amount of shape-shifting can disguise its mediocre gameplay. It's unlikely that anyone other than devoted fans of the last game will enjoy taking it for a spin.

It's like Transformers only instead of turning into a robot you morph into a friggin' jet ski

Enemies are so dumb it's like shooting fish in a barrel... with a bazooka!

The off-road vehicle is a pretty naff addition to the mix

Even the swampy jungle areas lack character and don't have much stuff to weave around

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? YEP, IT'S A PLANE!

When you near the end of a stage in a game like this, you expect to come face-to-face with quirky gargantuan nutters eager to banish you back to the beginning of the level.

But in keeping with Spy Hunter 2's one-dimensional missions, the boss clashes are excruciatingly ordinary and repetitive, leaving you only mildly satisfied when victorious.

Holy cannoli! It's a gigantic aquatic aeroplane! Shoot it dead with bullets and stuff

Holy guacamole! It's a gigantic land-lubbing aeroplane! Shoot it dead with bullets and stuff

Games VERDICT

Midway's middle-of-the-road sequel might be based on an Eighties arcade classic, but that's no excuse for dated gameplay and disappointingly dry graphics. **Mike**

- When things get busy the action is sparky
- Snappy arcade controls
- It's hardly any different from the last game
- Duff-looking enemies with ropey AI
- New features are badly implemented
- Multiplayer options are a total let-down

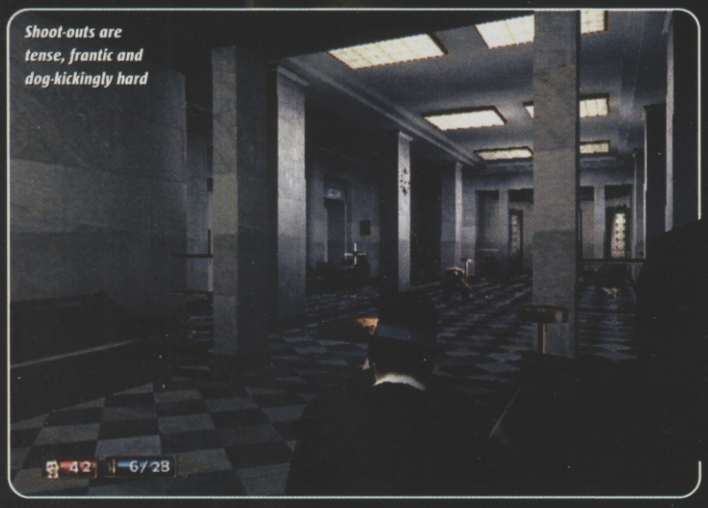
5 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS, TRY THESE... Need For Speed Underground (PS2)

'They're alright for the bloody Antiques Roadshow but where's my Banshee?'

It's hard to sink the black when there's a bullet in your skull

Shoot-outs are tense, frantic and dog-kickingly hard



MAFIA

The controls start to frustrate when things switch to on-foot action

Tommy branches out as a racing driver at one point in the game

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: TAKE 2 DEV: ILLUSION SOFTWORKS
WWW.CONSLE.MAFIA-GAME.COM
REVIEWED ON PS2
ALSO AVAILABLE XBOX

TOMMY GUNS AND TRILBIES MEETS GTA?

Lost Heaven, 1930: where the mob runs riot, concrete shoes are the fashion and riding old four-wheeled bangers doesn't make you a sick sex perv. Tommy Angelo's been a very naughty boy and now the mob wants blood. Mafia charts his life of crime, from humble beginnings as an out-of-luck cabbie to gangster supreme. Slip on the pinstripes boys, there's work to be done.

Initial comparisons to Grand Theft Auto are inevitable and, initially at least, not all that favourable. Early missions see you bumbling about the city of Lost Heaven, making pick-ups in your cab while you stifle a yawn and contemplate a good rummage in your pants instead. A few levels in though and you'll be blazing the streets, popping knee-caps with a semi-automatic and plastering brain matter over the walls using a well-timed swing of a baseball bat.

Unlike GTA's free-roaming non-linear approach, you're forced to play through missions in order, with each level being framed by some superbly cinematic and engrossing cut-scenes. Whereas GTA's focus was almost all on fast cars, auto-theft and balls-out, blazing road-rage action, driving about town thankfully forms only a small part of the gameplay in Mafia.

HEAD UP A SHEEP'S ASS

The 1930s cars you'll nab are slower than a fat girl on valium. Crawling along the bland and boxy streets of Lost Heaven is so dull you're forced to contemplate ways of making the action more fun, like playing with your head up a sheep's ass. Admittedly, the game revs up every now and again

FREE-WHEELIN'

If the rock hard difficulty level has your knuckles white with fury, you can unwind in the Free Ride mode.

Select your preferred driving conditions and melt some rubber as you roar around the city in uninterrupted bliss.

You can either wage bullet-ridden war in Free Ride mode...

...or settle back for a relaxing jaunt through the countryside

Visit the auto museum to learn how truely shite cars were back in the '30s

You'll need some meaty munitions to kick butt mafia stylee. Take the chair, Tommy

You could learn loadsa shortcuts through the city... but there's not a whole lot of point

JACKING A BOX

At the start of each mission, Ralph the mechanic gives you lessons on breaking into the latest four-wheeled racers. Not all mafia 'mecanics' are hitmen, see.

You can hi-jack any of the vehicles you see on the road, provided you've acquired the necessary skills back at Mafia HQ.

Pay close attention while Ralph nimbly fingers the lock...

...and those cars will be yours for the taking once you hit the city

Death came as a blessed relief after being caught with a chairleg up his ass

with some gun-filled, adrenalin-soaked chases through rain-drenched streets, but mostly driving about is just a way of getting from one place to the next faster than walking.

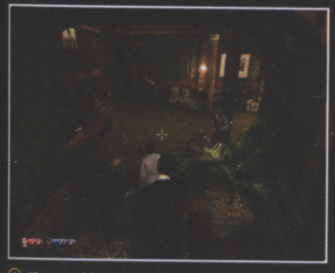
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE?

Once you've reached a level's key destination though, things pick up considerably. Usually, your feet'll hit the concrete and you'll pull out the big guns for some tense third-person shoot-out action. These parts of the game are immensely satisfying and varied, both in location and style – you'll be creeping around mansions in the dead of night to steal papers from a heavily guarded safe, or storming a gas station with bullets flying to rescue a fellow gang member who's about to squeal. But they're also harder than a row of nipples at a wet swimsuit contest in the Arctic.

Unfortunately, the insane difficulty level isn't helped by the awkward controls. Using a fairly standard dual-analogue set-up to strafe and turn, all's well until you're forced to grapple with the shoulder buttons and D-pad to draw and fire weapons. An enemy can easily rip you half a dozen new arseholes with his shotgun before you've even managed to whip out your pistol (or your gun, for that matter). Thankfully things get easier with practice, but you'll still curse the controller each time your bullet-ravaged torso slaps the tarmac.

Mafia isn't a game for everyone, and certainly isn't a quick fix for those GTA blues – if you're looking for seat-of-the-pants, free-wheeling carjack action, you can pick up Rockstar's GTA double-pack for the same price as this. However, despite some control issues and occasionally sedate pace, if you're itching for some deep, engaging, and challenging gameplay goodness, then Mafia more than fits the bill.

It's all non-stop laughs and happy, smiley people in Lost Heaven



The graphics improve considerably once you get indoors and into the missions proper

RECREATIONAL PURSUITS

The life of a gangster isn't all gun-fire, bloodshed and hat shops. Oh, no.

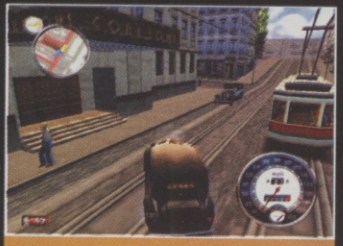
At one point in the game you'll get to try your hand at sweet-talking the laydeez. It's amazing what a brush with death will do for your sex-appeal.

Being the perfect gent, you walk the barman's daughter home...

Nothing like beating off thugs to put lead in your pencil. Now get her back safely

To reap the rewards of chivalry. Tommy proves he's named after the fast-firing gun...

Teach this man a lesson. Shoot him in the back!



Fully working tram system? Looks crap, mind

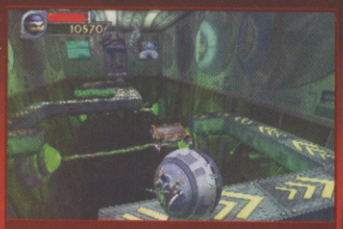
computer and video games VERDICT

Patience and thumbs of titanium are a must to make the most of Mafia. Overlook the sometimes naff visuals and controls and you have a long, atmospheric and rewarding experience. **Matt W**

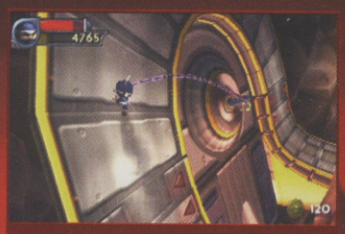
- Massively varied mission objectives
- Engrossing and cinematic storyline
- Just like being a real gangster!
- Frustrating difficulty level
- Initially awkward control set-up
- Ugly and repetitive city environments

7 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ Hitman 2 (PS2, Xbox, GC) ■ GTA3 (PS2, Xbox)



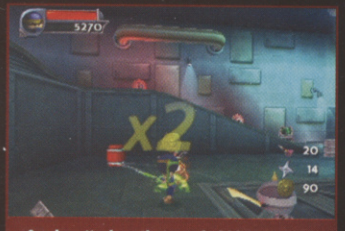
A case of gonad elephantitis, or a Marble Madness-style ball-rolling mini-game?



Some level sections involve running (and whipping) your way around tilted tracks

I-Ninja

Good job this wall is marked, so we know we can run on it, eh?



Combo attacks – that good old button-bash pays off as ever

Money can't buy you love. But it can buy new black pyjamas

Pint-sized enemies. But they only need a pint-size hero to tackle them

GAME INFO

OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

PUB: SONY DEV: ARGONAUT
WWW.ININJAGAME.COM

REVIEWED ON: PS2

ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, GC

NO SNEAKING – JUST HEAD-CHOPPING, RAIL-GRINDING PLATFORM ACTION

What good is a ninja that can't sneak? About as much good as Sam Fisher stripped of his trusty night vision and silenced pistol, you'd think. I-Ninja begs to differ.

This cartoon action platformer seems to think ninjas are what you get if you put Ratchet & Clank in a black hoodie. It still has much to learn, grasshopper.

COPYCAT ANTICS

Like Ratchet & Clank, I-Ninja's hero can fight hand-to-hand, shoot things, jump (including from wall-to-wall) and even grind rails. And much of the action does resemble the generic modern platform/action template as seen in Ratchet, Jak, and even Zelda. Only without Zelda's detail, the inventiveness of Ratchet, or the free-roaming levels of Jak. In short, just like the crappy graphical style that I-Ninja uses, the gameplay's a bit basic and under-nourished.

Fortunately, there's a belly-full of mini-games designed to divert attention away from the otherwise repetitive head-chopping and wall-running levels. Most of them fall into two camps: first-person shooting at things, or jumping onto a big ball and rolling around precarious walkways. Neither is exactly rocket science. Nor is the plot. When our ninja hero accidentally offs his own sensei, it falls to him to defeat Master O-Dor and save the world. That's it.

FOR THE CHOP

It's not all bad though. Despite the basic gameplay, there is a reasonable level of satisfaction to be had racking up the combos and unleashing the head-chopping moves on the armies of ninja goons you face off against. If you're a platform addict who's finished every other half-decent action platformer around, this is worth jumping on. But that's a big 'if'.

MINI-GAME FRENZY

Boxing giant robots, rolling ninja balls out of the levels, shooting cannons – I-Ninja's awash with mini-games.

Here are just two of the many diversions from the main action...

Barrel rolling. A little-known ninjitsu art perfected by Canadian ninjas

Shoot the boats before they beach. It's like Missile Command. But worse

TURN ON, TUNE UP

Unless you can use a blade like Beckham can bend a ball, you don't bring a knife to a gun fight.

Which doesn't stop I-Ninja turning up with nothing more than a chopper. Which is why it's a good job that at least his knife is a particularly big one, and gets bigger the further you go. No platformer is complete without bonus upgrades and new abilities. But I-Ninja's are pretty standard and you just know that a new upgrade heralds a new type of enemy vulnerable to your new skill.

Head-chopping action. I-Ninja's sword upgrades through the game

For long-range combat you get shuriken, as well as sniper darts. In limited quantities

VERDICT

This wants to be Ratchet-meets-Jak, but despite fast-paced action and some cool level design, it fails through basic graphics, frustrating repeated missions and clunky combat. Si

- Fast paced ninja slaughter
- Some variety in the action
- Lots of mini-games

- Repeat levels on a clock? No thanks
- Graphics are more basic than cartoony
- Chop chop chop dull combat

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Ratchet & Clank 2 (PS2), Metal Arms (PS2, Xbox)

SONIC HEROES

Sonic lovers will get off on the spectacular boss battles

You're just along for the ride for much of it

Some of the moves are too easy to pull off

The combat looks flashy but there's no real skill or finesse in it

Thrashing a few foes in sequence boosts your team attack gauge for a lame special move

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4
ONLINE GAMING PUB: SEGA DEV: TEAM SONIC WWW.TOUGHTEAM.COM
REVIEWED ON: PS2 ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX GC

YOU WON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS, BUT SONIC'S GONE FROM HERO TO ZERO

Sonic fanboys won't hear a bad word said about their beloved pincushion, but it's time we ripped off those blue-tinted spectacles and hit them in the face with the sledgehammer of truth!

It's true there was something pure and hardcore about the old 2D Sonic titles. You often needed to tap into primal levels of skill to get through stages and find all the hidden stuff. And when Sonic Adventure first appeared on Dreamcast we were all bowled over by its blinding 3D makeover.

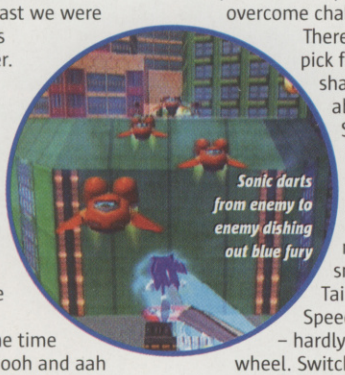
DE-RAILED

Problem is, Sonic Adventure didn't *improve* the Sonic experience. It just reworked the formula in three dimensions, ending up feeling even more on-rails than its 2D predecessors. Half the time you were just left to ooh and aah as pretty loop-de-loop roller coaster-style set pieces played out from dynamic camera angles.

Four years have passed since the hedgehog's 3D debut back on the Dreamcast, and Sonic Heroes highlights how little the series has moved forward. It chucks a handful of extra gimmicks into the mix, but only succeeds in watering, slowing and dumbing it all down.

TALENT SPOTTING

Sonic Heroes sells itself off the fact you now steer a trio of famous Sonic characters, switching between their unique and 'indispensable' talents to overcome challenges.

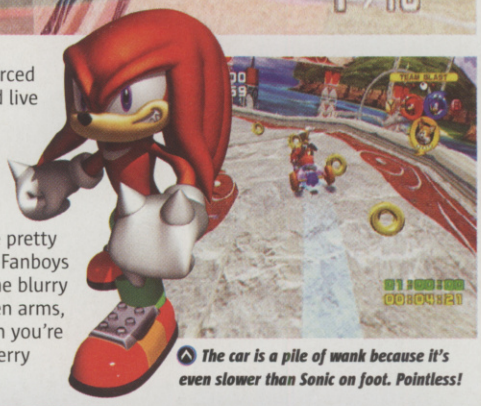


Sonic darts from enemy to enemy dishing out blue fury

There are four teams to pick from, but each gang shares near identical abilities. In Team Sonic we have Sonic with his gift of super speed (what a shocker), Knuckles with his mighty strength to smash stuff up, and Tails's ability to fly. Speed, flight and power – hardly reinventing the wheel. Switching between your characters is clumsy and slows down the action, which instantly makes the gameplay feel disjointed. But Sonic is at its best when you're forced to trust your instincts and live on the edge.

There's no denying Sonic Heroes is easy on the eye, but when you scrape away the glossy exterior you expose some pretty unspectacular gameplay. Fanboys will no doubt welcome the blurry blue critter back with open arms, but if you're a Sonic virgin you're best not popping your cherry with this offering.

Sonic Heroes is kiddie in terms of difficulty as well as appearance



The car is a pile of wank because it's even slower than Sonic on foot. Pointless!

A FRIEND IN NEED

How many superheroes does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Well, three, if Sonic Heroes is anything to go by. Each team member is only blessed with a couple of unspectacular skills. This quickly becomes frustrating, as you're constantly flicking between characters to carry out the simplest of dull tasks like smashing blocks, flying and sprinting.

Sonic's mates can ride in his slipstream

Knuckles does his bulldozer impression

Tails airlifts his buddies across a piddly gap

CVG VERDICT

The best looking but most clumsy Sonic adventure to date. It lacks the momentum and thrills of previous Sonics and will probably only appeal to diehard followers. **Mike**

- Some super fast and impulsive sections
- Spectacular styling
- The whole team thing is naff
- Too easy and very kiddie
- Often feels like a spectator sport
- Cheesy teams and crap combat

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Super Mario Sunshine (GC) F-Zero GX (GC)

The warp guardian is so terrifying, you'll want to stay put

SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY™

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: THQ | DEV: EUROCOM | WWW.THQ.COM/SPHINX | REVIEWED ON: PS2

AN ADVENTURE SO BIG YOU'LL BE CALLING FOR YOUR MUMMY

Dear Mum, the weather's lovely in Ancient Egypt at the moment – the clouds are a pretty shade of oppression and the unrepentant Evil that's swathing the land is setting the pyramids off quite nicely. I'm still having trouble keeping the sand out of my bum crack though, and I can't seem to stop those camels pissing on my feet. Hope you're well. Lots of love, Sphinx. P.S. Can you fix my nose?

As the world falls into chaos, Sphinx begins his epic quest to retrieve the mysterious and powerful Sword of Osiris from its hidden resting place in order to restore peace to these ravaged lands. Along the way, our hero's destiny becomes inextricably entwined with that of Prince Tutankhamen, who must vanquish an ancient curse that is threatening to damn him to eternity as a shambling, undead mummy.

Exploding in a shower of entrails isn't big or clever

BIG HARD ONE

Shoving elements from Zelda, Tomb Raider and Warioland into a blender and hitting the 'on' switch, Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy is an epic action-adventure in every sense. While the sequences involving Sphinx are filled with furious sword-swinging and Indy-style acrobatics through trap-riddled dungeons, playing as the defenceless mummy demands far more stealth and cunning to overcome the hazards licking at your putrid buttocks.

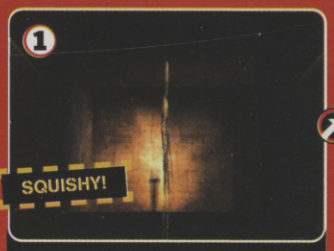
Exploiting the mummy's invulnerability, you'll be crushed, frozen, sliced and scorched to escape the perils and pitfalls ahead. It's here, with its excess of devious puzzles, that the game truly shines – you might claw chunks of flesh off your face in exasperation, but the sense of victory you get from conquering a dungeon is exhilarating.

Sphinx's quest is equally well realised, being rammed tighter than

BEND ME, SHAPE ME

Being a signed-up member of the living dead, the mummy can withstand all sorts of bodily harm in the name of lifting his curse.

In fact, contact with one of the many hazards strewn about the environments will infuse him with special abilities that can be used to overcome the obstacles in his path.



Not only does being squashed flat work faster than the Atkins Diet...

...but it means you can squeeze through tiny gaps like this too

Pump yourself with electricity and moonwalk like a pro...

...and you can also power up abandoned contraptions like this

Those dusty old bandages catch fire way too easily...

...but so do the rotten old planks that can block your way

Fire yourself from a monster's gob to reach normally inaccessible areas

The clumsy combat is one of the game's most frustrating aspects

At times the environments are absolutely breath-taking to behold

Nipping about on a giant bird is speedy and gives you a great view

Cutscenes are brilliantly animated but lack any voice-acting

The boatman will sail you across the huge gaming world for a price

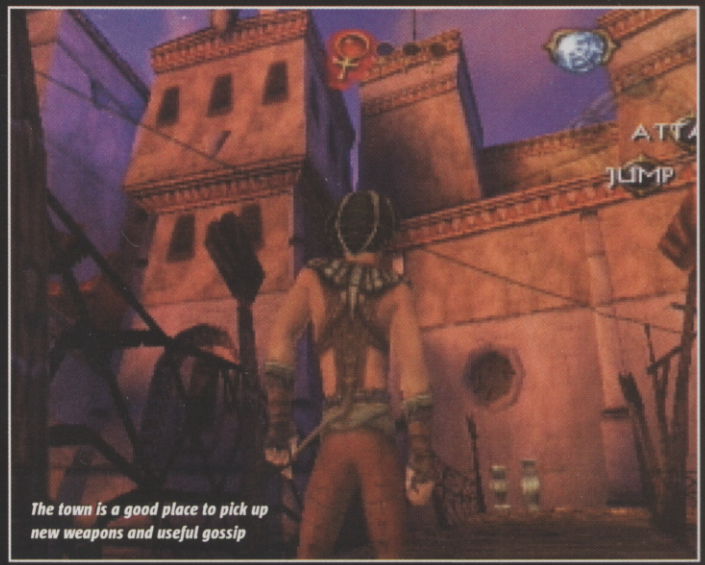
DRIVEN TO DISTRACTIONS

There's so much to do beyond the main quest that you could quite easily forget about saving the world from certain doom altogether.

Simon says: remember the sequences and win untold riches

Capture exotic beasts and show them to the world in the museum

Earn that 100 metres swimming certificate. Or more cash, probably



The town is a good place to pick up new weapons and useful gossip

a pig in a PVC nurse's outfit, with side-missions and sub-games. Sometimes though, with such a huge world map and so many distractions, it's easy to lose sight of what you're supposed to be doing next – particularly as the in-game hints are a little too vague for their own good. Also hindering the pace is Sphinx's occasionally sloppy and repetitive combat. Hitting the same button again and again can get tiresome when a bad guy sits on your face for the hundredth time.

SPHINXSTER

Despite these minor quibbles, Sphinx, while never really doing anything new, is a corker of a title. Its epic main quest, lush graphics and musical score ooze quality from every heavily bandaged pore. Some might find the whole thing a bit too taxing, but if you're up for a challenge, Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy makes the lesser action-adventurers out there look like ancient history. CVG

computer and video games VERDICT

Hardly revolutionary, but with so much to see and do, this well-designed and gorgeously produced action-adventure should have thumbs working and brain cells ticking for a long time. **Matt W**

- Original and intelligent puzzles
- Long, meaty main quest
- Impressively high production values

- Clumsy and repetitive combat
- Easy to lose track of what to do next
- Glaring lack of voice acting in cut-scenes

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Zelda: The Wind Waker (GC), Prince of Persia (PS2)

GOBLIN COMMANDER

UNLEASH THE HORDE

GAME INFO

OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-2

ONLINE GAMING

PUB: JALECO DEV: JALECO
WWW.GOBLINCOMMANDER.COM

REVIEWED ON: PS2

ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, CUBE

YOU THOUGHT WAR WAS UGLY? WAIT UNTIL YOU LEAD THIS LOT INTO BATTLE

You can't watch Return of the King and not want to command your own legion of slavering goblins, orcs and cave trolls. Which is exactly what Goblin Commander lets you do.

It's a real-time strategy game designed specifically with a joypad in mind. What this means is that rather than selecting individual units, your troops are automatically assigned to one of three tribes, each of which is assigned a button on the Dpad. Point at somewhere on the map and press the corresponding button, and the tribe marches to this point. Simple. Kind of like Pikmin, only set in Mordor.

Sounds cool then, but while the slick interface promises much, leading your little men to supremacy over the other rival Goblin factions is beset by problems, starting with the visuals.

FUG UGLY

Goblin Commander's rough-hewn landscapes and angular figures are not a patch on the interstellar beauty of Nintendo's flower-power minor classic. And the lack of visual clarity hits gameplay hard, as you can't easily tell which terrain is breakable for resources, which terrain is passable to your troops, and what the hell is going on when the fighting starts.

But the main gaffe is spoiling the elegance of the interface with forcing you to attend to so much other fiddly stuff to keep your tribes up to strength. Because the goblins fall like flies when combat starts, you're permanently flicking back to base to build new replacements. So they've done away with loads of unit selection and organisation faff, only to replace it with loads of units building faff instead! What dill-wads!

You'd also have thought there'd be a fair share of humour in there, what with a Goblin's lack of social etiquette but it's a poker-faced affair, with your troops acting more like honourable Knights of the Round Table than dirty, thieving, man-flesh eating gits. Damn shame. We'll just have to watch Return of the King again instead.

Repairing knackered buildings is a chore

Each tribe has a Titan – like this ogre

You can't rotate the view

BUILD! BUILD!

There are two things to collect in GC – money and souls.

Souls are used to build your goblins and trolls, whereas money is used to purchase upgrades and defence towers.

Souls are collected by killing enemies or controlling soul fountains

Money is collected by breaking up logs, houses and other scenery

Money can be spent on upgrading your units' weapons and armour

Defensive towers are the only buildings you can construct

DIRE TRIBES

So there are a maximum of ten Gobs in a tribe, and you can have a maximum of three tribes at once, yes?

Each tribe has its own button on the D-Pad, and pressing that button means they all head to where your cursor is pointing at.

You can set a tribe to follow its Titan, which you control

You can also go into third-person mode and control a tribe directly

computer and video games VERDICT

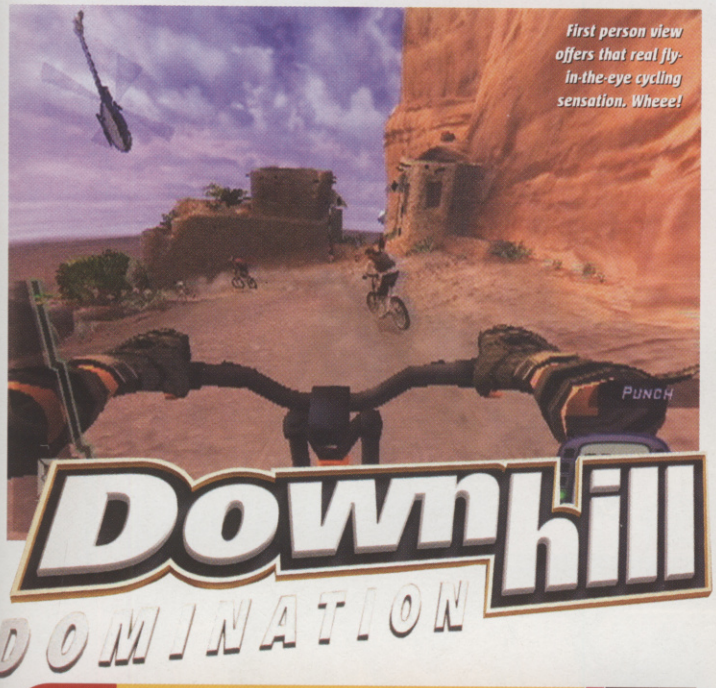
Goblin Commander had us gnashing our pointy yellow teeth in excitement. But in creating a console-friendly RTS, it's only managed to replace one set of hassles with another. **Steve O**

- Console friendly interface
- Different to your average RTS
- Chance to be the bad guys

- Fiddly unit construction
- Poor visuals
- Lack of variety

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Pikmin (GC), Command & Conquer: Generals (PC)



First person view offers that real fly-in-the-eye cycling sensation. Wheee!

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1-2 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: CODEMASTERS | DEV: INCOG INC. ENTERTAINMENT | WWW.CODEMASTERS.CO.UK/DOWNHILLDOMINATION | REVIEWED ON: PS2

JUST ANOTHER EXTREME SPORTS GAME CLOGGING UP THE HILLSIDE

Say what you like about extreme sports games, but you can't deny that they make you feel pretty cool. SSX and Tony Hawk's have always made us feel like we could bust out sweet tricks with the best of them.

Bullshit. We'd end up arse over tit quicker than Britney's marriage. We can ride bikes though, so we felt a bit more comfortable with Downhill Domination from the start.

THE LOCAL BIKE

Although that could've been because we've seen this type of game so many times before. You know the drill – choose 'cool' character, race down mountainside, do tricks, unlock stuff. Three race modes keep things at least a wee bit fresh: Freeride is a straight burn down the mountain, Technical Downhill is steep and twisty, and Mountain X has enough lumps and bumps to make the Elephant Man's head look silky smooth.

To be fair, the tracks are bone-shakingly good, with enough downhill speed over rough terrain to ensure your battered nuts shut down their baby juice factories permanently. You're free to ride over every inch of hillside, sticking to the dirt tracks or venturing into the bracken for shortcuts and speed boosts. It's fast and free-roaming, and when you're hurtling through narrow forest paths at 70 kph there's a brilliant sensation of danger that'll make your nipsy clench tight enough to crimp off barbed wire.

PEDAL OF HONOUR

First to the finish line wins, but you don't have to play fair to pick up points. Attacking your rivals with fists, feet and bottles will earn you stacks of cash and earn them a crispy bit of road rash. The big money comes from tricks – get some air and you can pull off motocross-style acrobatics by holding combos of the shoulder buttons, SSX-style. It works well, but the lack of pyrotechnics means you never get that "holy crap! Look what I just did" feel.

And that's Downhill Domination all over – it simply doesn't make you feel cool. There's just not enough attitude to elevate the standard gameplay above the average and after the style and sheen of SSX3 and THUG, this simply looks second rate. It's fun to play and there's loads to unlock, but you'd be better getting piste with SSX than rattling down Domination's mountain trails.

BIKE LOCKS

Downhill Domination's gameplay sticks close to the extreme sports path, but in terms of unlockables it's screaming through the undergrowth!

There's a heap of licensed biking equipment and reams of sponsored clothing, but we especially dug the dumb bonus features. Riding sheep anyone?

Unlock the Moshbowl and you can kick the crap out of fellow bikers

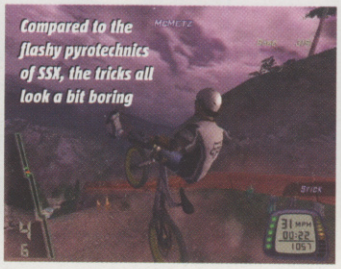
The Sparky Tricks unlock adds some weird Red Arrows-style flair to your moves

Riding a sheep on the hillsides of Scotland? Ah well, when in Rome...

The downhill tracks are big, varied and filled with distinctive character

Combat adds action early on in races, and a few well-thrown bottles could snatch you a win

Check out his phat tricks! Check out that crazy lightning! It's so, y'know, rad!



Compared to the flashy pyrotechnics of SSX, the tricks all look a bit boring

The weather effects add atmosphere

GAMES VERDICT

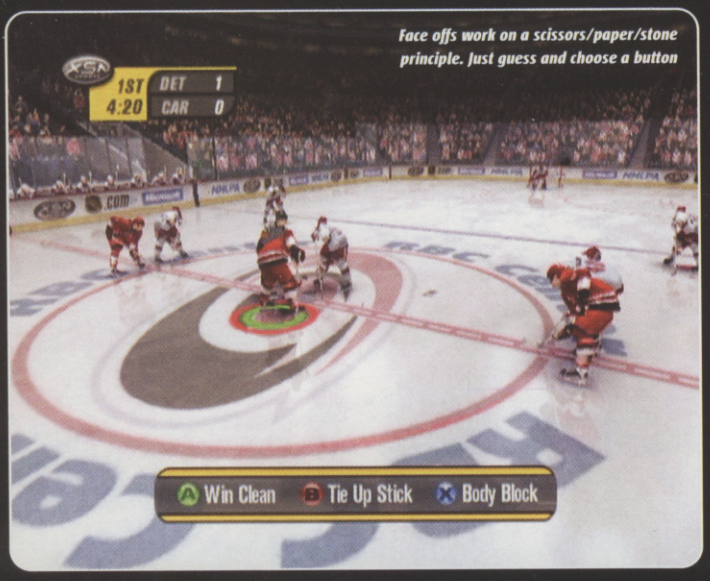
It's got great tracks and a cracking sensation of speed, but Downhill Domination just isn't good enough, or cool enough, to make us fall head over handlebars in love with it. **Graeme**

- Great sense of speed and vulnerability
- Tooth-crunching collisions
- Some really interesting unlockables

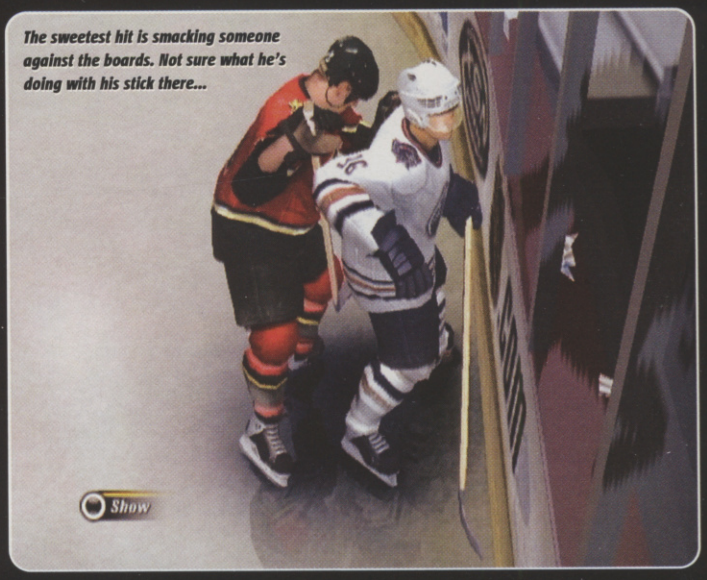
- Stages are a tad too short
- Nothing startlingly original about the action
- Lacks that secret 'cool' factor

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ SSX3 (PS2, XB) ■ Tony Hawk's Underground (PS2)



Face offs work on a scissors/paper/stone principle. Just guess and choose a button



The sweetest hit is smacking someone against the boards. Not sure what he's doing with his stick there...

NHL RIVALS 2004

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-10 | REVIEWED ON: XBOX

PUB: MICROSOFT * DEV: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS
WWW.XBOX.COM/EN-US/NHLRIVALS2004/

ICE COOL ONLINE, BUT A FROSTY EXPERIENCE ON YOUR LONESOME

We love Americans, and we especially love rubbing their cheeseburger-chewing, corn-fed faces in some sweet videogame defeat. Isn't that what trans-Atlantic friendship is all about?

If you've ever demolished a trash-talking Yank at an online game you'll know what we mean. We haven't, however, experienced this thrill playing NHL Rivals 2004. Ice hockey is firmly a minority sport here, so good as we are at home, we ended up facing off against some chubby New Yorker who plays stuff like this with the same kind of obsession we lavish on Pro Evo.

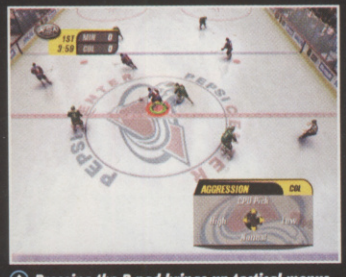
In short, we got minced. But it's cool because Rivals is yet another addition to Xbox's brilliant XSN, the online service that lets you meet fellow gamers, organise leagues and tournaments, and track down players more suited to our ice hockey standards. Probably five-year-old kids. Blind ones at that.

Looks dumb, but keeps pucks out of the eyeballs...

HOCKEY-DOKEY

Problem is, if you are serious about your ice hockey games Rivals' online capability is one of the few things to get excited about. For a start, the Rivals tag sounds cool but adds very little. Like cross-town rivalries in footie, these relationships are important, but all Rivals does to approximate the loathing is to have the commentators say things like, "If your friends don't like ice hockey this is the kind of game you want to bring them to!" Thanks pal, but if our friends didn't like ice hockey we'd just save ourselves the ticket price and buy more beer.

Fair enough, there is more likelihood of a ruck. Each player has a Fuse bar that rises as they get walloped. In matches between rivals everyone's fuse is shorter so the gloves are more likely to come off.



Pressing the D-pad brings up tactical menus for on-the-fly playcalling

IT'S A STICK UP

As well as the Fuse bar every player is categorised as an Enforcer, an Agitator, a Sniper, or just balanced. Each has

Breakaways never feel very exciting and it's difficult to put the biscuit in the basket

Holding the shoot button charges up for a powerful slapshot, but takes longer

KICK HIS PUCKIN' HEAD IN!

Ice hockey is actually a bloody good sport, and we mean bloody, 'cos a game rarely finishes without some poor sod spurting claret on the cold stuff.

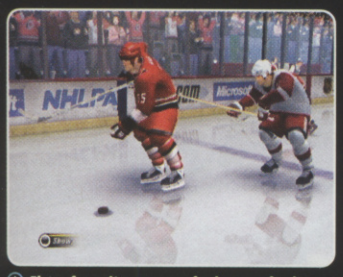
In a stroke of genius, fighting is actually allowed and the refs will only step in when one player hits the deck! Rivals captures this glorious tradition with a simple but fun fight system.

You can try and avoid fisticuffs, but then you'd be a big fanny

There's a generous selection of punches, but sadly no Glasgow Kiss

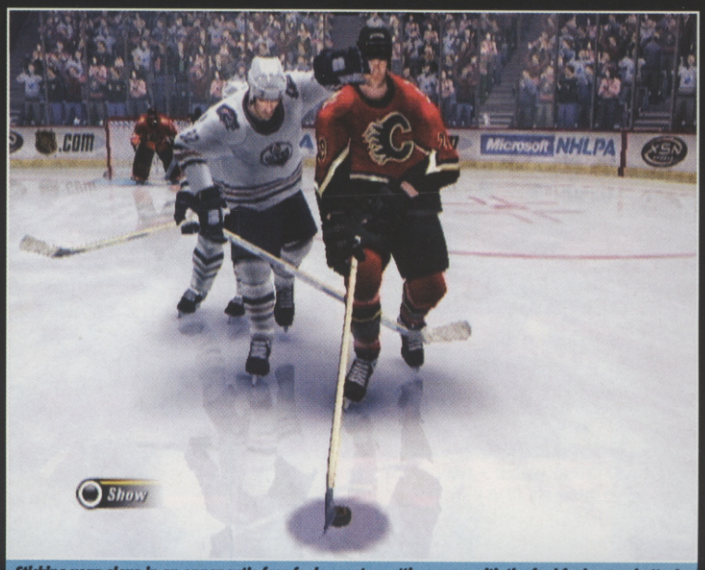
Land the knockout blow and you'll get to enjoy a replay of your big moment. Bosh!

You can block or dodge punches. It's a bit like golden Nintendo oldie Punchout



The ref won't see every foul, so go for it

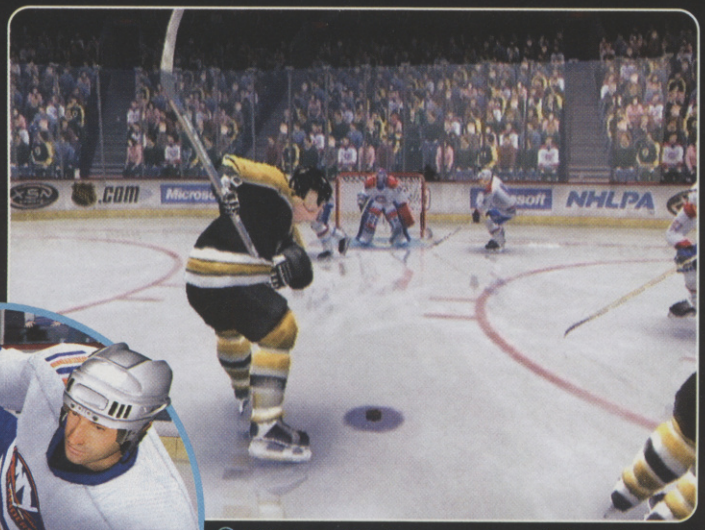
The automatic replays suck



Sticking your glove in an opponent's face feels great - getting away with the foul feels even better!

their own strengths, weaknesses and special abilities that must be understood to get the most out of their game. Snipers, for instance, can shoot the dingleberries off a cow's arse but are susceptible to getting creamed by hard-hitting Enforcers.

But, other than those nice touches, Rivals fails to match up adequately against EA's NHL or ESPN NHL. The controls are too loose and there's so much inertia behind players that grabbing a free puck can be an exercise in precision analogue stick control. Passing, too, isn't as fluid or quick as we've seen in other hockey games, and big hits don't feel very satisfying.



Nailing the puck into the top corner is ace - but it rarely happens

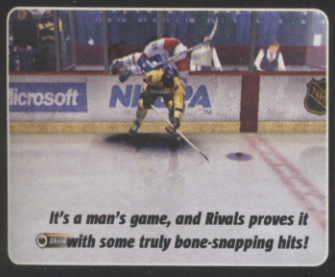
There's no blood. Shame, apparently it bounces on ice...

THAWING OUT

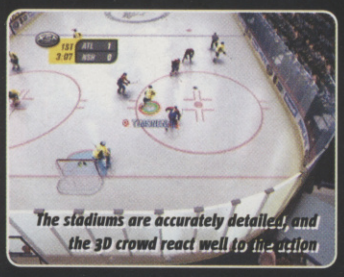
Rivals also fails to impress with its presentation. EA's NHL looks wicked, and we absolutely love ESPN NHL's cool TV stylings. Rivals, however, opens every game with the same player animations, consistently chooses crap camera angles for replays, and suffers from rare but annoying frame-rate problems.

Its icey action hasn't completely thawed, it's just defrosted a bit. The XSN support is far superior to the online modes in other ice hockey games, but in every other area Rivals fails to face off. And anyway, where's the fun in getting thumped by lardy Yanks?

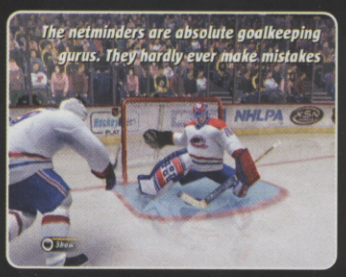
Might look like a friendly multi-man cuddle, but this is an aggressive way to steal the puck from a trapped player!



It's a man's game, and Rivals proves it with some truly bone-snapping hits!



The stadiums are accurately detailed, and the 3D crowd react well to the action



The netminders are absolute goalkeeping gurus. They hardly ever make mistakes

ROLES OF THE ICE

Rivals spices up the hockey action by categorising players according to their personality and skills.

Snipers are fast and accurate but go down if a gnat guffs a mile away, Enforcers smack the crap out of everyone but lack finesse, and Agitators are annoying little bastards who nip away at your ankles. It's a nice way to introduce some unique moves, but only a slight tweak to the usual skill-based stats.

When Enforcers bodycheck it comes with extra hot sauce - perfect for flattening that cocky attacker

Agitators can pull back opponents by giving out 'facewashes' - grabbing their helmet and dragging them down!

Snipers have this sweet spin move to shake off defenders, confuse keepers, and make space for the slapshot...

And on defence they're specialists at using their sticks to batter opponents in the ballsack! Unfair but effective!

GAMES VERDICT

Think football games - if EA's NHL is Pro Evo and ESPN NHL is FIFA, this is the equivalent of This is Football. Not necessarily bad, but XSN support is its only advantage over its, er, rivals. **Graeme.**

- Quality XSN online capabilities
- The Fuse bar is a cool touch
- Player classes and special moves are original

- Dodgy frame rates cause occasional jerks
- Imprecise controls damage accessibility
- Rubbish replays and lazy presentation

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... NHL Hockey 2004 (PS2, XB, GC, PC)

WRATH UNLEASHED

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4 | REVIEWED ON: PS2

PUB: ACTIVISION DEV: THE COLLECTIVE
WWW.LUCASARTS.COM/PRODUCTS/WRATH

DOES FOR BOARD GAMES WHAT DAMON DID FOR POSH – STUFF ALL

The thought of a board game is enough to send most folk spiralling into a pit of suicidal depression. Too much thinking, not enough action. In fact, the nearest you can realistically get to any sort of heart-pounding excitement in such circumstances is when one mate thumps another for bashing his bishop during a gentlemanly bout of chess.

Wrath Unleashed is such a boardgame, only played out on a console. And, cleverly, it tries to overcome any perceived lack of action by beefing up its core strategy play with traditional beat 'em up fodder.

The aim is simple. Command an army of mythological monsters and march them across a 3D 'board' to capture as many strategic points as possible. Whenever two opposing troops clash on the same square, it's fight time. The gameplay switches to a one-on-one ruckus, with two beasts trying to slaughter each other in the most gratuitous manner possible.

"Oh go on, please let me touch your nipples..."

RUMBLE OF THE RUNTS

Sounds like a good idea in premise, then, except it's during these combat sections that the game emerges flatter than a blind hedgehog on a motorway. Limited fighting moves, weedy spells, monotonous pace – it could hardly be any less entertaining. Plus, what would you rather watch – two greased-up, shapely DOA heroines rolling around in a picturesque woodland retreat, or a unicorn and a cyclops zapping each other with bolts of magic? Yes, our point, exactly.

Deep in the Aenna camp, everyone is pooing themselves

"Take that, nasty little Centaur man!"

A Nightmare Adept gets to grips with a Chaos Demon

It's a shame because the actual 'tabletop' side isn't implemented all that badly, especially when there's up to four human players vying for supremacy in the same game. Generally speaking though, if you like this sort of thing, you'd be better off sticking to chess and bagging a copy of Soul Calibur II. Problem solved.

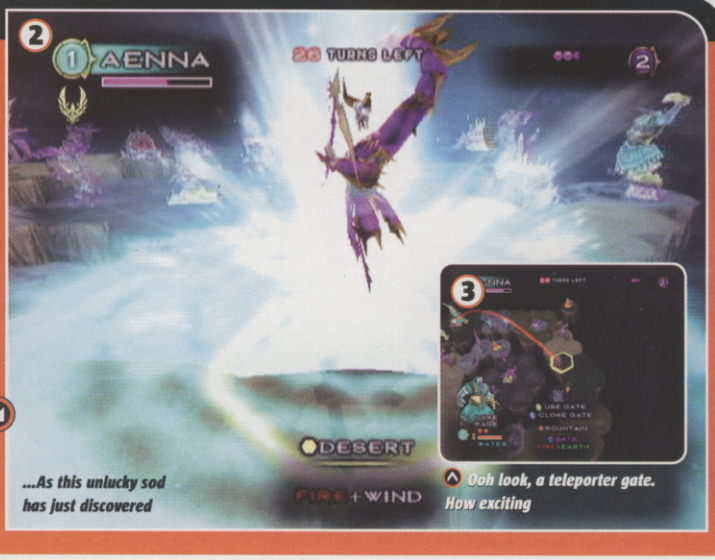
Now that's what you call getting the 'cold shoulder'

TACTICALLY SPEAKING

Basic tactics play a large role in how you command your forces (unless you LIKE losing). Armies are divided into a variety of species, with each boasting their own unique strengths, weaknesses and movement allowance.

Different terrain also affects the performance of your fighters, and if you're feeling particularly cunning, 'special' beings will be able to shift the tide of battle by casting spells during the board game section.

Demi Gods are so hard, they can cast nasty spells...



...As this unlucky sod has just discovered

Ooh look, a teleporter gate. How exciting

Don't suppose anyone here is 'board' yet...?

GAMES VERDICT

Has its moments, but alas good ideas don't necessarily make a good game. Playable in multiplayer, but the simple fighting won't take long to grate. Better games please... **Stephen D**

- The board game bits work surprisingly well
- It all looks very pretty
- Great if you like cheesy fantasy characters

- Dreary fighting more dated than Spice Girls
- Where are all the sexy ladies, eh?
- A flawed attempt at something new

4 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Chess, Snakes & Ladders, sleep

Kirby AIR RIDE™

Tilt the control stick to glide

Use Kirby's Copy ability to swallow enemies and 'borrow' their abilities

If the incredible pink bulk hurts your eyes, you can change his colour

GAME INFO OUT: FEBRUARY 26 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: NINTENDO DEV: HAL
WWW.KIRBYKIRBYKIRBY.COM
REVIEWED ON: NINTENDO GAMECUBE

NINTENDO CAN KEEP THEIR SHINY PINK BALLS TO THEMSELVES AFTER THIS

Few people realise that pink blubber-butt Kirby was actually the inspiration for Solid Snake. In real life, he's a part-time member of the SAS. A skilled assassin and 'wet-works' expert, he's a blob not to be messed with. This makes it a little problematic telling him (and you), that his new game is not up to his usual standards. But we're very brave here at CVG, so here goes.

Kirby Air Ride is a racing game where the controls have been stripped down to the bare bones. One button to rule them all – in this case, the mighty green 'A'. Use it to perform all major actions in the game, occasionally in tandem with the control stick. Guide Kirby with the left stick as he hurtles along the courses, waggling it to Quick Spin when your rivals get too close, and tilting it to Glide when in the air. For everything else, press 'A'.

EAT ME

Although it's great to see a game that encourages the very young to start playing, the majority of GameCube owners and Kirby fans will find Air Ride severely lacking in any sort of challenge. Sure, it's fun and quite a laugh to race your mates round the impressive courses, or to try and beat the records in the Stadium, but the gameplay is too basic. Some of the courses appear to be trying to ape Super Monkey Ball, but they lack the finger gnawing tension and crazy humour of the simian stunner.

Great for pre-schoolers who don't know any better then, but that's all.

Attempt to break records, just like in Super Smash Bros Melee

Kirby loves to grind rails, Tony Hawk stylee, but he never falls off

EASY RIDER

There are three main gameplay modes to tackle. If you fancy a straightforward race, opt for Air Ride mode.

If you are under 10 and want to race tiny Kirbys on a weeny ickle 2D course, pick Top Ride. If you want to be confused and dizzy, choose City Trial.

The Air Ride courses look great, but you can't fall off - too easy

Top Ride is nothing more than a simple dash around a mini-course

In City Trial, beat your rivals to collect machine power-ups. Or sumfink

Stadium challenges such as Air Glide can be unlocked in City Trial

We don't like propelling him into a boiling vat of lava. But we must

Games VERDICT

We can't let Kirby get away with it just because he's cute and is Pink's favourite game character (probably). The fact is, Air Ride lacks any long-term appeal for all but the tiniest of tots. **Maura**

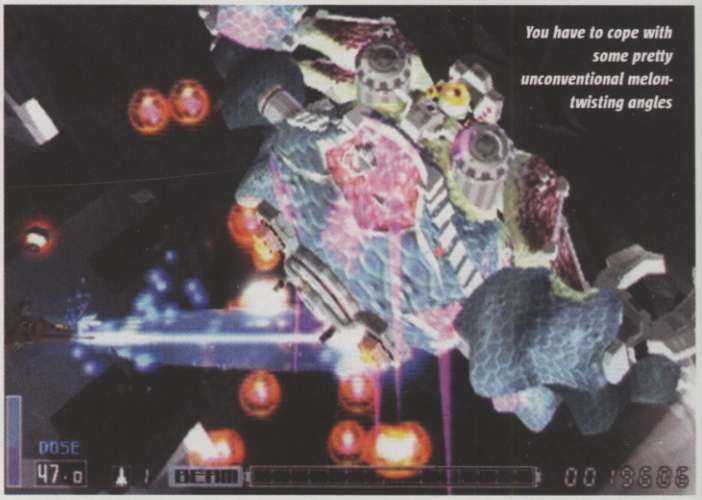
- Graphics are bright enough to power London
- The inventive courses are fun to explore
- Lots of extras to unlock

- One button control system is lame
- City Trial mode is a confusing mess
- Not enough courses in Air Ride mode

5 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Super Smash Bros Melee (GC)

The single-player AI Battle mode option is just unplayably bizarre



You have to cope with some pretty unconventional melon-twisting angles

R-TYPE FINAL

GAME INFO
OUT: MARCH 26 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
* PUB: METRO 3D * DEV: IREM
* WWW.IREM.CO.JP/OFFICIAL/RFINAL
REVIEWED ON PS2

INTERGALACTIC STRESS FEST RAMMED WITH PLEASURABLE PAYBACK

As gamers, we're notorious for self-inflicting huge amounts of stress and pain. If we're not scaring the crap out of ourselves in zombie-filled mansions we're snapping tendons playing EyeToy. This morning, Lee viciously slapped his right bollock during a wild Donkey Konga bongo session, causing it to rapidly swell up to the size of a large onion. His weren't the only eyes watering, we can tell you.

Okay, playing R-Type Final shouldn't result in any freak testicle-clipping accidents. But it will leave you so tense that your head will fill with blood to bursting point, and your insides will feel like a sack of knotted rope. Shoot 'em up sadomasochists will love it!

Sadly there are instances when the game suffers from minor slowdown

In true old-skool style, if your ship takes even one hit, you're forced to replay a section. This is why you end up so tense. Every twitch of the D-pad and every button press is insanely crucial. One false move, one bad decision and that's it! But you'll relish this stress, soak it up and use it to your advantage, because toughing it though Final's furious levels is such a rewarding blast.

CRAFTILY DOES IT

Unlike shooters such as Ikaruga that have chaotically bullet-peppered stages which only call for cat-like reactions, Final requires you to play with strategy and patience, as well as raw instinct.

Each of the 99 unlockable ships is unique, and your choice of customisable power-ups will massively affect your chances of completing a stage – one might be awesome at long-range devastating attacks, while another kicks ass at taking out enemies from the rear.

ALIEN CUSTOMS

As well as customising your craft, your ship can toggle between four speeds during a mission. And balancing speed with precision is essential. At times you need to move like a ferret up a trouser leg to dodge a fast incoming laser beam, but in other situations you're best off gliding around slowly with ultimate control to avoid masses of incoming bullets.

Every level is rammed with fiercely intense alien encounters that will sometimes see you launching your controller into outer space. However, for all the stress Final cooks up, it lays on the pleasure twice as thick.

USE THE FORCE!

No, it's got sod all to do with Star Wars. In R-Type's universe, The Force is a detachable power-up that slots onto the front or rear of your ship.

You can fire it off into enemy clusters and it'll charge up your special smart bomb attack by smacking into enemy craft and absorbing bullets.

You're being gunned from the rear, which is never a good thing

Send The Force into the danger zone and let it do your dirty work

Once it's fully charged your special gauge, let rip with the smart bomb

If you're being attacked from above and below, find a power-up like this double-ender

You can blast this weird porcupine-frog-flamingo, or cheekily zip through its lanky legs

This boss is like a giant pink todger with a metallic foreskin. Beware his fiery jet of wee

games VERDICT

Final is a thrill-a-nanosecond old-skool blaster. With dollops of gorgeous graphical polish and top-drawer action tighter than a pair of Kylie's hotpants, it's well worth a shot. **Mike**

- Wickedly well thought-out action
- Delicious sci-fi scenarios
- Masses of monster weapons and ships
- Loads of ways to tackle levels
- Stages are a tad too short
- Nothing startlingly original about the action

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Contra: Shattered Soldier (PS2) Ikaruga (GC)

REVIEWS ROUND-UP!

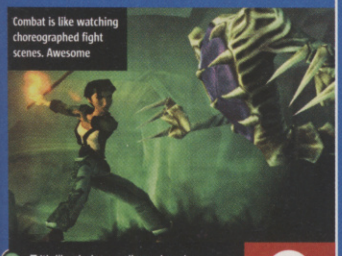
Like trying to cram your giant Hobbit feet into a pair of midget clogs, we've got so many reviews this month we've had to ram our expert reviews section to the hilt, using special industrial lubricants and a giant shoe horn. In fact, the mag's so stuffed you better be careful when you handle these pages, as any sudden movements may cause a containment breach.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

■ Format: Xbox, GC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: march 19

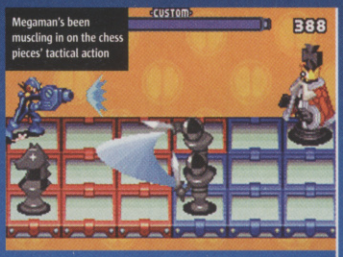
A delicious fruit smoothie of a game that throws fighting, driving, flying, platforming and much more besides into the mix.

Photojournalist Jade must uncover a global conspiracy on a beautifully drawn alien world. It's one of the most cinematic and gripping story-led action games around.


Combat is like watching choreographed fight scenes. Awesome

- ■ It's like playing a really good movie
- ■ Loads of variation and seamless levels
- ■ Jade's co-stars are a bit rubbish
- ■ Massive widescreen borders squash the picture

8 OUT OF TEN



Megaman's been muscling in on the chess pieces' tactical action

MEGAMAN BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE

■ Format: GBA ■ Cost: £24.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: March 5

The latest GBA Megaman is a sort of Battle Network / Pokémon Stadium cross.

There's no running around RPG-style, but loads of battles. Not as much fun as BN, mind.

- ■ Loads of chips to collect and trade
- ■ Strategies can get pretty deep for the expert
- ■ Not much fun for novices
- ■ Not as much gameplay on offer as other MM games

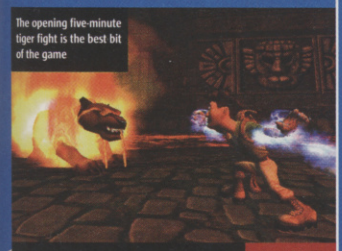
6 OUT OF TEN

PITFALL: THE LOST EXPEDITION

■ Format: PS2, Xbox ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: February 20

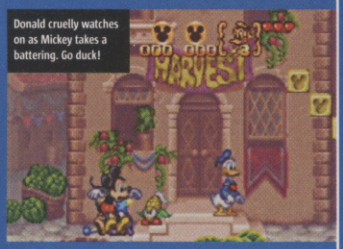
Classic retro swinging across croc pits gets a 3D update, but gameplay is left in the dark.

Action's fast, but mostly limited to running in or out of the screen, Crash Bandicoot style.


The opening five-minute tiger fight is the best bit of the game

- ■ Simple enough for everyone to play
- ■ The jungly music is quite snazzy
- ■ Repetitive and uninspired gameplay
- ■ Offers nothing you haven't seen better elsewhere

4 OUT OF TEN



Donald cruelly watches on as Mickey takes a battering. Go duck!

DISNEY'S MAGICAL QUEST 3

■ Format: GBA ■ Cost: £24.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: March 12

Yet more sickly sweet adventures for Mickey and Donald in this annoying platformer.

Grab the blocks littered about the levels to lob at enemies or at bigger boxes to find hidden treats. Remedial gameplay.

- ■ Unmistakably Disney visuals look is okay
- ■ Play together with a friend in Party Mode
- ■ Utterly pointless if you own any other platform game ever
- ■ It's very similar to the last two DMQ games

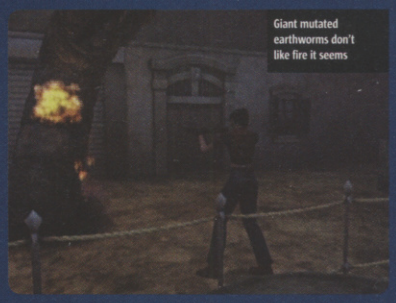
5 OUT OF TEN

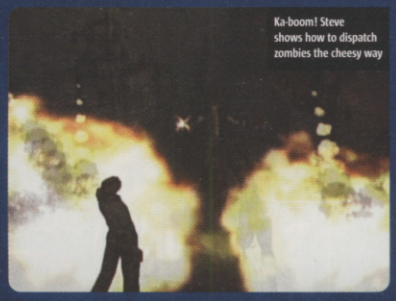
RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X

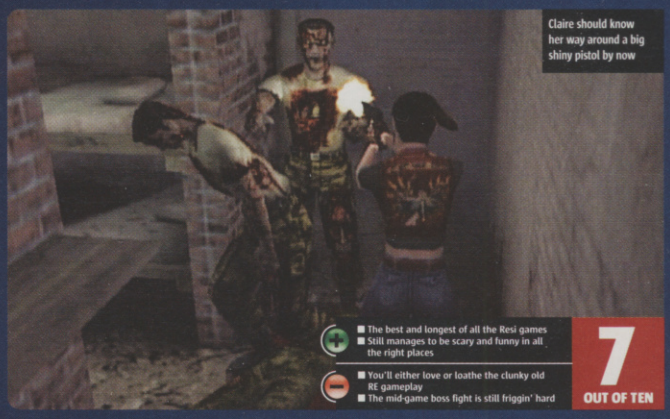
■ Format: GC ■ Cost: £29.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: March 12

The moaning zombies, the cheesy dialogue, the clunky controls and crap restrictions on how much booty you can carry round... it's got to be Resident Evil.

This final Cube remake in the saga is the pinnacle of the early RE games. Everything is honed to perfection, making it one of the most enjoyable and dramatic survival horror games ever. The real trouble is the series is showing its age. 'Classic' RE gameplay is as frustrating and rewarding as ever, both fun and excruciating in equal measure. Worth checking out.


Giant mutated earthworms don't like fire it seems


Ka-boom! Steve shows how to dispatch zombies the cheesy way


Claire should know her way around a big shiny pistol by now

- ■ The best and longest of all the Resi games
- ■ Still manages to be scary and funny in all the right places
- ■ You'll either love or loathe the clunky old RE gameplay
- ■ The mid-game boss fight is still friggin' hard

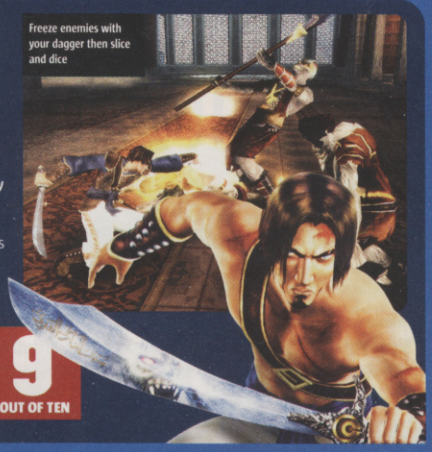
7 OUT OF TEN

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

■ Format: Xbox, GC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: February 20

Classic adventure remake practically redefining what platform action should be all about.

Precision jumping, wild acrobatics and intense sword fights mix with time-bending powers like rewind. A bit short, but still stunning.


Freeze enemies with your dagger then slice and dice

- ■ The most agile hero ever created
- ■ Amazing time powers change the way you play
- ■ It's totally linear with one route through
- ■ It's over a little too soon, but definitely replayable

9 OUT OF TEN

CARMEN SANDIEGO

■ Format: PS2 ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

Plots don't get lamer than a pinched instrument, so below average action and bland locations seem somehow fitting here.

Carmen's been a figurehead for yawnathon edutainment titles for years. She should leave proper games to the professionals.

It's all so lacklustre you can't help but shrug your shoulders

- ■ Some cool surfing and wire-riding sections
- ■ You get to hit people with a big stick
- ■ Totally uninspired and derivative play
- ■ Lame story and characters are an embarrassment

4 OUT OF TEN

Grandma's course of halitosis treatment was a failure

HAUNTED MANSION

■ Format: PS2, Xbox, GC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

The Eddie Murphy movie tie-in: explore spooky house, capture ghosts, solve puzzles.

Gets repetitive and the ghouls wouldn't scare a toddler. Ignore if you already own Grabbed By The Ghoulies or Luigi's Mansion.

- ■ Nicely created game world that's fun to explore
- ■ Loads of ghosts and ghouls to pester
- ■ Feels very old fashioned and restrictive
- ■ Very dark and muddy-looking

6 OUT OF TEN

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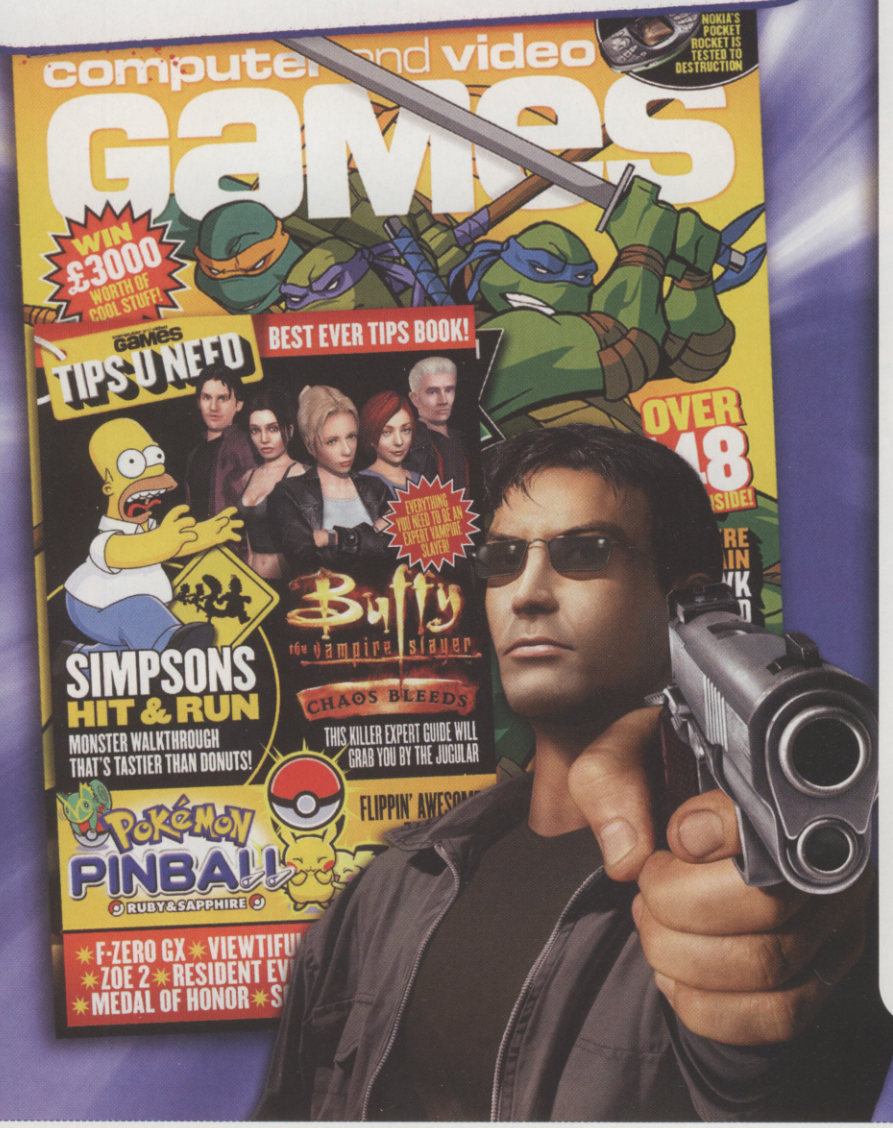

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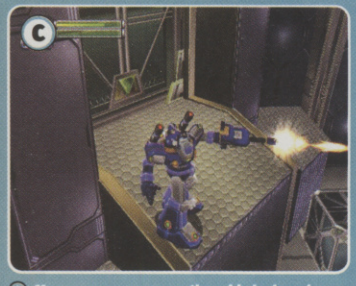
CAN YOU PICK OUT MEGAMAN'S COOL NEW ALLY, AXL?

QUESTION: All you have to do to win this intergalactic, planetary prize is study these three screenshots and tell us which one shows Axl kicking some evil Reploid ass. Not sure what Axl looks like? Then check out the dude to the right!

Megaman might be a lightweight compared to huge enemies like this, but he still packs a punch!

The new boy is hard as nails! He can shape-shift into other Reploids and STILL looks badass



Megaman can even up the odds by hopping into this huge laser-spitting mech!

When you speak about videogaming legends, Megaman is truly the guru. Mario's alright, but at the end of the day he's just a short, fat, baldy plumber with a hot girlfriend.

Megaman, though, is a top-of-the-range badass. He's got a metal exoskeleton, rockets in his shoes and a ruddy great cannon on his arm. What's not to like?

So we were well excited about the latest games in the legendary series. X7 is the first outing for the tin-headed hero on PS2 and we loved the awesome power ups, crazy bosses and the introduction of Axl, Megaman's wicked mate! And Battle Chip Challenge on GBA lets us top up our Megaman fun on the move with its cool mix of Chip collecting and strategic battles!

We're offering you the chance to scoop the ultimate Megaman prize so you'll be able to get all the Reploid kicks you'll ever need. All you have to do is answer the easy question below! Get to it!

WIN ALL THIS!

*A MASSIVE 28" WIDESCREEN TV WITH STAND, A SKINNY DVD PLAYER, A HI-TECH VCR, A PS2, GBA, A COPY OF MEGAMAN X7 AND A COPY OF MEGAMAN BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE! FOUR RUNNERS UP EACH GET A COPY OF MEGAMAN X7 AND MEGAMAN BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE!**

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AWESOME! GET ILL IN A CRAZY ALIEN WORLD WITH A HUGE TV, SWEET DVD PLAYER AND 10 COPIES OF KYA: DARK LINEAGE!

We'd been waiting for a classic platform game that let us indulge all our extreme sports fantasies, so when Kya turned up we were ollying off the walls. Platforming, fighting, adventuring, and enough board-riding and air-surfing to give Tony Hawk sticky trunks? Yes please!

Kya herself's even a bit of all right, if you ignore the fact she's got a hairdo like those scabby gompers selling tie-dye t-shirts down the market. In fact, we dug the crazy lass so much that we awarded Kya: Dark Lineage a coveted EIGHT in last month's exclusive review.

And since we're not ones to keep all the fun to ourselves, we've got together with our homies at Atari to offer you the chance to win a massive TV, a rockin' DVD player and copies of the game! Spreading the love, or what?

All you have to do is check out the screens to the left and tell us which one shows Kya indulging in the truly extreme sport of swamp surfing? Come on, dude, you gotta be in it to win it!

EXTREME MENTALISM!

QUESTION: All you have to do to win this gnarly prize is study the three screenshots below. Man, that crazy chick is all over the place, beating up Wolfens and soaring through the air on thermals, but in which screen is she busting out some crazy 'swamp surfing'?

For a lassie she can float serious air biscuits, but is Kya riding the crest of a swamp wave?

She can handle herself, too. Check out her kick-ass combat moves!

And she's got surfing skills that'd put Sunny Garcia to shame. What a girl...

WIN ALL THIS!

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● MS CACKMAN

Christ, do women ever stop moaning? She says she wants to get married, because she's sick of just being 'Ms' Cackman.

I've told her I'm not forking out eight grand just so she can have an 'R' in her title. CVG don't pay me enough. She's always whining about her big arse as well. I'm like: "Woman! You're SPHERICAL. You're never going to look as thin as Kuru Kuru Kuruin's wife". She's stick thin because she IS A STICK. And how am I supposed to know how many grams of carbs are in a power pill anyway?

● MARIO

He's finally figured out it was ME spraying the M logo graffiti on my car, and he's been giving me free car washes for the past year.

He burst in here the other day and I was using his moustache clippers to trim my arse beard. It was getting like a jungle down there, what was I supposed to do? He's under a lot of stress anyway, because Miyamoto wants to base Mario 128 on him working in a laundrette. It's a continuation of the cleaning theme. Thing is, they've replaced Princess Peach with Pauline Fowler. Didn't help his stress levels me knocking on his window in the middle of the night dressed as Donkey Kong.

● SONIC

Sonic's at a pretty low ebb right now. Amy gives him hell, because I convinced him to let Sonic Team film their wedding video.

As she's walking down the aisle, the camera is stuck behind a wall. Then it suddenly zooms right up into Sonic's face. It's hilariously crap. I bet the wedding night was fun, now that Knuckles and Tails are permanently glued to his side. Oh, and I greased up the loops in the Green Hill Zone one night for a laugh. He nearly smashed his face open. He'd only just got out of jail for GBH after I told him Billy Hatcher was Eggman in disguise.

● BILL GATES

I was talking to Bill on Xbox Live the other day playing PGR2. I was like "Bill! This is nothing like Hong Kong.

"People actually LIVE in Hong Kong. There aren't just eight cars cruising empty streets." He started screaming that his hardware was Number Two, and I was like, "Bill! Don't be so hard on yourself. It's not that bad." Kinda quaint how he still refers to poos as 'number twos'.

● THE GHOSTS

I got the guys a few gigs. How was I supposed to know it would hurt something wicked to get sucked into Luigi's hoover?

And they got shot to bits in Ghosthunter. They're circling around the house now. Making perfect 90 degree turns around in the garden. Good job they don't have AI, or they'd just walk through the walls and get me. I don't even have any power pills left.

The bulge in my pocket is because the Dead or Alive Volleyball girls practise out the back. That sniper sight I borrowed off the Unreal guys REALLY zooms in.

WHO DUNNIT?

Cackman's copped it. Games cops are puzzled. Who's to blame? Will blue ghost Inky spill all, or maybe yellow blob-boy staged his own death, confident that after losing 4lbs in 11 years on the Atkins diet, no-one'd recognise him. You must have ideas – best one wins a game of your choice. Mail 'em to the usual address marked 'RIP Fatty'.

Cackman's opinions aren't necessarily those of CVG. And anyway, he's dead now. Let him rest in peace, goddamn you

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Dead to Rights
Desert Storm
Deus Ex: Invisible War
Dino Crisis 3
Dynasty Warriors 4
Elder Scrolls: Morrowind
Enter the Matrix
Evil Dead: Fist. of Boomstick
FIFA 2004
Freedom Fighters
Goblin Commander
Grand Theft Auto 3
Grand Theft Auto: V. City
Halo
Harry Potter & Ch.of Secrets
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Indiana Jones: Emp.'s Tomb
Italian Job: L.A. Heist
James Bond: E. or Nothing*
Knights of the Old Republic
Lord of the Rings: F. of Ring
Lord of the Rings: R.of King
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter
Matrix, Enter the
Max Payne
Max Payne 2
Medal of Honor Frontline
Medal of Honor: R. Sun
Midnight Club 2
Mission Impossible:O.Surma
Mortal Kombat: Deadly All.
Need for Speed Undergr'nd
Nightfire
Project Gotham Racing
Project Gotham Racing 2
Rainbow Six 3
Rallisport Challenge
Raw 2, WWE
Red Faction 2
Return to Castle Wolfenstein
Rolling
Secret W. Over Normandy
Sega GT 2002
Silent Hill 2: Inner Fears
Simpsons: Hit & Run
Sims: Bustin' Out
Soul Calibur 2
Spawn: Armageddon
Spiderman The Movie
Splinter Cell
Star Wars: Jedi Academy
Star Wars: Knights Old Rep.
Streets of L.A: True Crime
Terminator 3 R.of Machines
Terminator: Dawn of Fate
The Great Escape
The Matrix
The Simpsons: Hit & Run
The Sims: Bustin Out
The Thing
Tiger Woods Golf 2003
Time Splitters 2
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
Tony Hawk's Underground
Top Spin
Total Club Manager 2004
True Crime: Streets of LA
Turok, Evolution
Vice City, Grand Theft Auto
Worms 3D
XIII (Thirteen)

Plus Many More...

PLAYSTATION 2

A = 0 1

Age of Empires 2
Agent Under Fire
Aliens vs Predator:Extinction
Angel of Darkness
ATV Off-Road Fury 2

B = 0 2

Backyard Wrestling
Bad Boys 2*
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu
Battlestar Galactica
Blade 2
BloodRayne
Broken Sword: S. Dragon
Buffy 2: Chaos Bleeds
Burnout 2 Point of Impact
Bustin' Out, The Sims

C = 0 3

Chaos Legion
Colin McRae Rally 3
Colin McRae Rally 4
Conflict Zone
Conflict: Desert Storm
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Crash B'coot: Wr. of Cortex
Crash Nitro Kart

D = 0 4

Dark Angel, J. Cameron's
Dark Cloud 2
Desert Storm 2
Devil May Cry 2
Die Hard: Vendetta
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2
Dragonball Z: Budokai
Draken: Ancient Gates
Dynasty Warriors 3
Dynasty Warriors 4

E = 0 5

Enter the Matrix
Escape from Monkey Island
Evil Dead: Fist. of Boomstick
Extermination
Extreme G3

F = 0 6

FIFA 2002
FIFA 2003
FIFA 2004
Final Fantasy 10
Final Fantasy X-2
Fire Warrior
Freedom Fighters
Futurama

G = 0 7

G1 Jockey
Getaway
Ghost Hunter
Gladius
Gran Turismo 3
Grand Theft Auto 3
Grand Theft Auto: V. City
Great Escape

H = 0 8

Harry Potter & Ch.of Secrets
Haven: Call of the King
Headhunter
Here Comes The Pain
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin

I = 0 9

Indiana Jones: Emp.'s Tomb

J = 1 0

Jak 2: Renegade
James Bond 007: Nightfire
James Bond: Agent Under F.
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis

K = 1 1

Kingdom Hearts
Kya: Dark Lineage

L = 1 2

Lara Croft: Ang.of Darkness
LMA Manager 2003
Lord of the Rings: F. of Ring
Lord of the Rings: R.of King
Lord of the Rings: T. Towers

M = 1 3

Mafia
Manhunt
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Matrix, Enter the
Max Payne
Max Payne 2
Maximo vs the Army of Zin*
Medal of Honor Frontline
Medal of Honor: R. Sun
Metal Gear Solid 2
Midnight Club 2
Mission Impossible:O.Surma
Mortal Kombat: Deadly All.
Mummy Returns

N = 1 4

Need for Speed Undergr.
NFL Street
Nightfire
No One Lives Forever

O = 1 5

Onimusha: Warlords

P = 1 6

Premier Manager 2002
Primal
Prince of Persia: S. of Time
Pro Evolution Soccer 2
Pro Evolution Soccer 3
Project Zero
Project Zero 2

R = 1 8

Ratchet and Clank
Ratchet and Clank 2
Red Faction
Res. Evil Code Veronica X
Return to Castle Wolfenstein
Rocky
Rugby 2004

S = 1 9

Secret W. Over Normandy
Silent Hill 2
Silent Hill 3
Simpsons: Hit & Run
Sims
Sims: Bustin' Out
Smackdown! 5: H.C.T.Pain
SOCOM: US Navy Seals
Sonic Heroes*
Soul Reaver 2
Spawn: Armageddon
Spiderman The Movie
Splinter Cell
Spy Hunter 2
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly
SSX 3
Starsky & Hutch
State of Emergency
Syberia

T = 2 0

Tekken 4
Terminator 3 R.of Machines
The Getaway
The Great Escape
The Italian Job: L.A. Heist
The Return of the King
The Simpsons: Hit & Run
The Sims
The Sims: Bustin Out
The Thing
The Two Towers
Thirteen (XIII)
This is Football 2003
Tiger Woods Golf 2004
Time Crisis 3
Time Splitters 2
TOCA Race Driver
Tom Clancy's Jungle Storm*
Tomb Raider: Angel of Dark.
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
Tony Hawk's Underground
Total Club Manager 2004
True Crime: Streets of LA

V = 2 2

Vice City

W = 2 3

Warhammer: Fire Warrior
World Rally Champ.2 Extr.
Worms 3D
WRC: World Rally Champ.
WWE Smackdown!: SYM
WWE Smackdown!: HCTP

X = 2 4

X-Files: Resist or Serve*
XIII (Thirteen)
X-Men 2: Wolve's R.

Y = 2 5

Yu-Gi-Oh! D. Roses

Plus Many More...

GAMEBOY COLOR

Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle
Castlevania Adventure
Crystal Pokemon
Dragon Warrior Monsters 2
Dragonball Z Leg.S.Warriors
Fatal Fury
Gold Pokemon
Harry Potter & Phil.'s Stone
Harvest Moon 2
Metal Gear Solid
Perfect Dark
Pokemon Blue
Pokemon Crystal
Pokemon Gold
Pokemon Red
Pokemon Silver
Pokemon Yellow
Yu-Gi-Oh!: Dark Duel Story
Zelda: Oracle of Seasons

Plus Many More...

PS-ONE

Alex Ferguson P.Manager'01
Alex Ferguson P.Manager'02
Alien Resurrection
Alone in the Dark 4
Alundra 2
Beyblade
Breath of Fire 4
Broken Sword
Broken Sword 2
Command & Conquer
Crash Bash
Destruction Derby
Digimon World
Dino Crisis
Dracula Last Sanctuary
Dragonball Z: Final Bout
Driver 2
FA Premier League Man.'00
Fear Effect: Retro Helix
FIFA 2000
FIFA 2004
Final Fantasy 7
Final Fantasy 9
Harry Potter & Phil.'s Stone
In Cold Blood
LMA Manager 2002
Mortal Kombat Trilogy
Parasite Eve 2
Resident Evil
Shadowman
Silent Hill
Spyro 3: Year of the Dragon
Star Wars:Jedi Power Battles
Syphon Filter 3
Theme Park World
Tomb Raider
Tomb Raider 2
Tomb Raider 3
Tomb Raider 4: Last Revel.
Tomb Raider 5: Chronicles
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
Yu-Gi-Oh! Forbidden M.

Plus Many More...

N64

Bad Fur Day
Banjo Kazooie
Blues Brothers 2000
Goldeneye
Zelda: Majora's Mask
Zelda: Ocarina of Time

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DREAMCAST

Freestyle Scooter
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Sonic Adventure
Tomb Raider 4: Last Revel.

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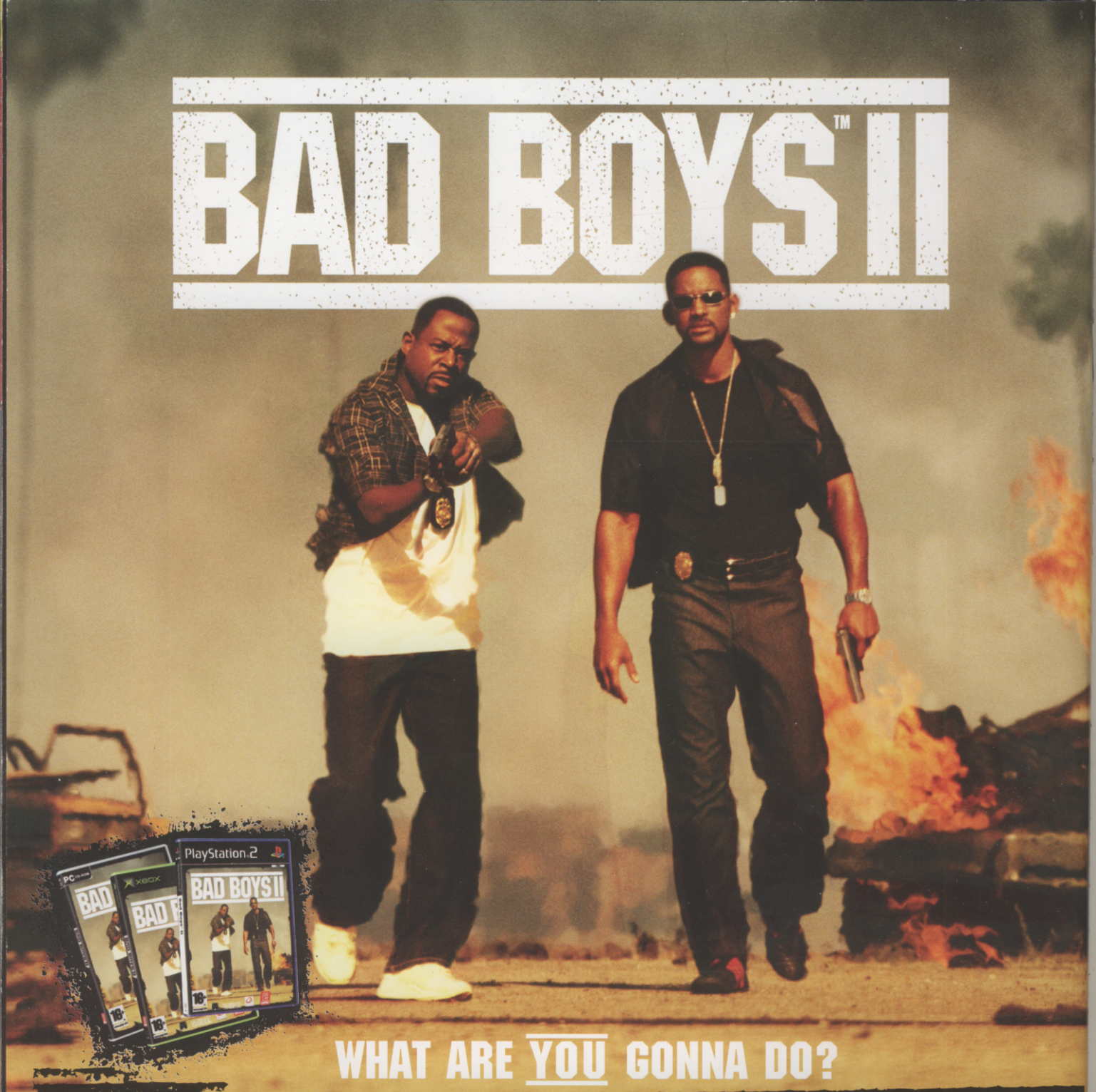
BAD BOYS™ II



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